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First look:
FORCE WORKS™
T. JENNEY
AVON
Spider-Man®: Mutant Agenda
Behind the Marvel® movies

STAN LEE PRESENTS:

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Until I read the interview with Avi Arad, I had no grasp of *how many* exciting new projects were in the Marvel pipeline. And how one human being can coordinate that much ongoing activity — the movies, the television, the toys, the video games — is beyond comprehension.

It's lucky for all of us that Avi has more energy reserves than Galactus.

That interview is a beginning, of sorts. For the last few months we've been experimenting, doing ground-breaking articles that sneak behind the scenes, examining the trading cards, the video games, the apparel, the movies, and, of course, the comic books. We've had a few scoops, too, such as the first official mention of the new *Incredible Hulk* video game, and the first press on the **BREAK THE CHAIN** combination of comic books and rap music.

As we've been preparing these feature articles, we've been establishing a network of contacts and sources that would turn J. Jonah Jameson green with envy. And now we're going to begin to make use of these sources, more so than ever before. The articles you've already seen were good, but compared to what we have planned for the future, they're just the appetizer.

From here on out we're going to dig deeper, ask more of the really hard questions, and bring our readers more of the raw facts than ever before. **MARVEL AGE** is going to be *the* source, and as our plans come to a boil, you'll be witness to an exciting new project (one we really can't talk about. . .yet) that will be the talk of the industry in no time flat. You've been our loyal **MARVEL AGE** contingent for quite some time now, and I just wanted you to be the first to know.

Watch this space.

Unfortunately, while you're watching this space, you won't find Renée Witterstaetter. Renée has been an integral part of **MARVEL AGE** for quite a while, both as editor and as color artist, and we were quite sad when she recently announced that she was leaving Marvel to take a position with Topps Comics. Good luck, Renée, and keep in touch.

— Steve Saffel

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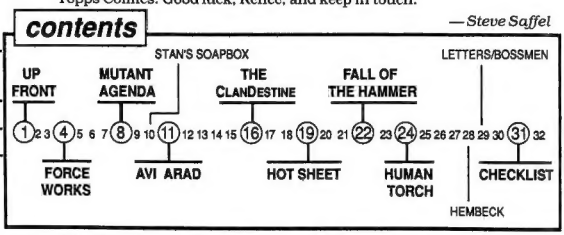
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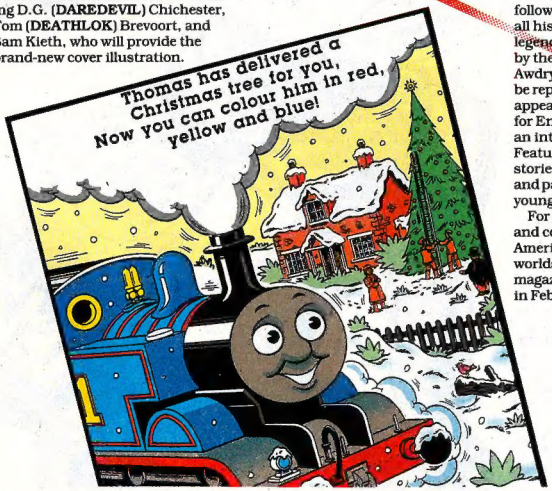
Up Front

ROAST THE OLD AND TOAST THE NEW

To bid 1993 a "fond" farewell, the annual 48-page **MARVEL YEAR-IN-REVIEW** hits the stands in December. According to Editor Evan Skolnick, this year's full-color magazine-sized edition will be printed on glossy stock, more biting and satirical than ever.

Features will include the *Infinity War Bored Game*, which, once started, never ends; a cover story entitled "Bring on the Bad Guys," which attempts to explain why today's villains are more popular than the super heroes; a scathing piece which examines Marvel's greatest licensing failures; an in-depth look at the ill effects super heroes have on the environment; and the X-Men and the Avengers' *real* original line-ups (well, according to the **MARVEL YEAR-IN-REVIEW**, anyway).

The **MARVEL YEAR-IN-REVIEW '93** will be perpetrated by a variety of infamous writers and artists including D.G. (**DAREDEVIL**) Chichester, Tom (**DEATHLOK**) Brevoort, and Sam Kieth, who will provide the brand-new cover illustration.



THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE

Thomas the Tank Engine, the lovable star of PBS-TV's *Shining Times Station*, who has co-starred with such luminaries as Ringo Starr and George Carlin, is now the headliner of a new monthly Marvel magazine, a companion to the new **SPIDER-MAN MAGAZINE.**

THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE will follow the adventures of Thomas and all his friends in stories set in the legendary land of Sodor, as created by the British author Rev. Wilbert Awdry. This monthly magazine will be reprinting material that originally appeared in a Marvel U.K. magazine for English audiences, thus lending an international feel to the tales. Features will include entertaining stories with an educational angle, and pages of activities and games for younger fans.

For the last couple of years, Thomas and company have been taking the American toy, television, and book worlds by storm, and now the comic magazine is slated to appear in stores in February.

THE MYSTIQUE CONNECTION

For years, there have been hints of a connection between Nightcrawler — founding member of both the "new" X-Men and Excalibur — and Mystique, once the leader of the Brotherhood of Evil Mutants.

X-MEN UNLIMITED #4, on sale in January, will put an end to the rumors once and for all when "All Her Children," a tale by Scott Lobdell and Richard Bennett, reveals the true nature of the relationship. Playing off of elements from the **SABRETOOTH** limited series, the story involves pivotal information uncovered by Graydon Creed in that four-part serial. Once out in the open, it will lead to profound ramifications involving Creed, Mystique, Nightcrawler, and Rogue (Mystique's foster daughter).

MUTANT SACK ATTACK!

In December, Marvel Comics and the National Football League will present the special Super Bowl premiere issue of **NFL-PRO ACTION.** This 64-page magazine will include 12 bound-in Fleer/Marvel trading cards featuring Marvel heroes *and* sports superstars, and a cover with an NFL action photo combined with art by Adam Kubert and Matthew Ryan (of the current **WOLVERINE** and **X-MEN** teams).

NFL PRO ACTION will feature 48 pages of articles about football fans' favorite NFL players and teams, including a locker room report on Dallas Cowboys quarterback Troy Aikman, and a "Training Tips" feature spotlighting Junior Beau of the San Diego Chargers.

It will also include an all-new 12-page **X-MEN** story with an interior cover, written by **X-MEN ADVENTURES** scribe Ralph Macchio. Los Angeles Raiders' defensive end Howie Long makes a cameo appearance in the story, in which the X-Men discover that the Morlocks are kidnapping subway riders for use in a human slave pool. The dynamic illustrations come courtesy of the **EXCALIBUR ANNUAL** art team of Chris **(NOVA)** Marrinan and Keith **(PUNISHER 2099)** Williams.

HOPE YOU'RE READY TO GO DOWN, LITTLE MAN!
TALKIN' HOLOGRAM, NO LESS... JUST MY LUCK.
HMPH. RECOGNIZE THE UNIFORM AND THE FACE... HOWIE LONG?

ROAR OF THE THUNDER GOD

Following the epic events in the "Blood and Thunder" crossover, **THE MIGHTY THOR** will take a new direction with issue #472, scheduled to ship in January. Tom Grindberg, known for his work on **THOR ANNUAL #18, SECRET DEFENDERS,** and **WARLOCK AND THE INFINITY WATCH,** will take over as regular penciler. Ron Marz will continue to write **THOR,** and Mike DeCarlo will remain as series inker.

THOR #472 heralds the start of an important storyline in which Thor's nemesis, Loki, returns to Asgard. The story will culminate in the double-sized **THOR #475,** which will feature a titanic battle between Thor and Loki, as well as the death of a major supporting character.

Events in the coming year will revolve around Thor's doings in Asgard and amid the vastness of space. Readers can expect appearances by the Enchantress, the Destroyer, and Thor's Asgardian supporting cast, including Sif, Balder, Heimdall, and All-Powerful Odin. The Silver Surfer and Warlock are also scheduled to drop in on the action, along with some of the more Earth-bound heroes of the Marvel Universe.

SPIDER-MAN. . .JUNIOR?

SPIDER-MAN MAGAZINE, a 32-page color magazine, aimed at expanding Marvel's audience of younger readers (approximately ages six to nine), is scheduled to arrive in stores in January.

Each issue will include two brand-new comic stories, one starring Spider-Man, the other starring other Marvel characters, beginning with The X-Men in issue #1. The Spidey adventure in the premiere issue will be penciled by John Romita, Sr., one of the most famed of the web-slinger's long list of illustrious artists. The comics will be created for younger readers using larger lettering, less text, and more straightforward storylines than the complex monthly serials.

The magazine will also include jokes, an X-Men word search, a Spider-Man maze, a Spider-Man trivia quiz, a create-your-own-super hero feature (readers can submit their creations to the magazine for possible inclusion in a future issue), and the Mighty Marvel Hall of Fame (a two-page spread featuring a Marvel character and his vital statistics). **SPIDER-MAN MAGAZINE** will also include a feature entitled "Spidey's Amazing World of Nature," which will list "amazing but true" facts about the earth's various creatures.

In addition to eight bound-in Fleer trading cards (four each of Spider-Man and the X-Men), the premiere issue will sport a cover penciled by John Romita, Sr.

FINGER ON THE PULSE

In December the **M.A.X. YEARBOOK,** a 32-page comic, features a full-cover hologram and the artwork by Joe Quesada, Lee Weeks, Andrew Wildman, Greg Capullo, Andy Kubert, Dwayne Turner, Bill Sienkiewicz, and Liam Sharp used during the X-Men and Avengers 30th Anniversary.

December is X-Men Animation Month and Marvel will produce a serigraph cell of Andrew Wildman's cover to **X-MEN ADVENTURES SEASON II #1,** matte framed, labeled, and stamped for authenticity.

Starting in January, Marvel's spacefaring characters — Thanos, Terrax, Legacy, Jack of Hearts, Morg, and Tyrant — will star in a six-issue series entitled **COSMIC POWERS** written by Ron Marz, illustrated by Ron Lim, Walter McDaniel, Andy Smith, Angel Medina, and Tom Grindberg.

– Terry Hernon

FORCE WORKS

We're Not Going to Take It!

After a battle with Satannish and the new Lethal Legion, and then being pulled into the Avengers/X-Men battle with the Acolytes, the Avengers West Coast have been summoned to Avengers Mansion in New York for an important conference. The subject: whether the Avengers West Coast concept really works. Is the team really doing its job?

It is suggested by the East Coast team that the West Coast team is not pulling its weight — that the team is not living up to the Avengers legend, and that the Avengers West Coast are actually a second-string team.

Mayhem ensues as each member of the Avengers West Coast team reacts differently. Some are hurt, some are angry, some are just plain stunned. And then Iron Man arrives with an idea for a new team. A team he has dubbed Force Works.

The preceding is a short summary of the happenings in **AVENGERS WEST COAST** #100-#102, the final three issues of the series. That's right; as of issue #102, **AVENGERS WEST COAST** will be no more. However, there will be a new ongoing series residing in its place — **FORCE WORKS.**

FORCE WORKS will be written by the British team of Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning, with pencils by Tom Tenney and inks by Michael Avon Oeming. **AVENGERS WEST COAST** Editor Nel Yomtov will edit **FORCE WORKS.**

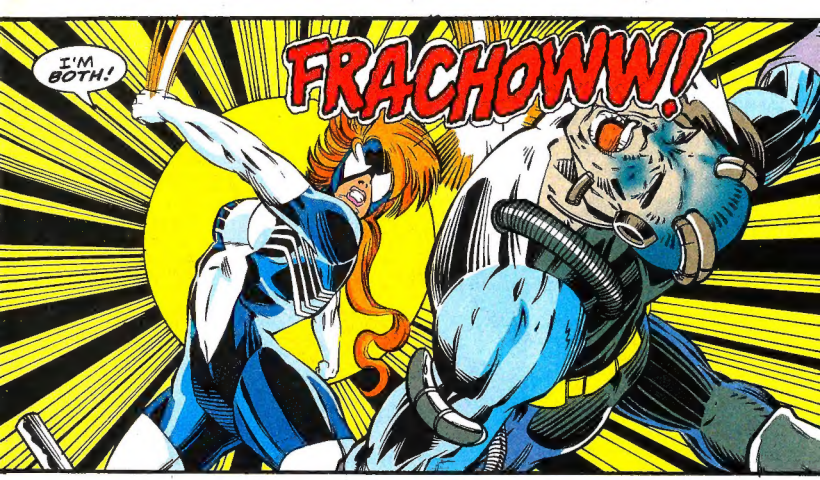
PROACTIVE HEROES

Abnett described Tony Stark's motivations in forming the new team: "For quite some time, Tony Stark (*aka* Iron Man) has been studying what works and what doesn't work about the Avengers," Abnett said. "He has decided that the basic problem can best be expressed by looking at the team's name. In order to be an 'Avenger,' one has to wait for something to happen that can be avenged. The team is *reactive*. Stark sees a need for a team that is proactive — a team that seeks out the beginning of world problems and stops them before they happen."

Stark's idea will be carried out by combining a team of super heroes with a machine that is the cutting edge of technology. That machine, which determines the probability of disasters, alien attacks, and super-villain activity, is dubbed **The Works**, and it will allow the team to be *proactive*. They can actually stop disasters before they strike.

"The machine is housed in what we are calling a 'smart building' with an almost sentient computer that runs everything inside. The building is known as Force Works, and that's where the team's name comes from," **AVENGERS WEST COAST** and **FORCE WORKS** Editor Nel Yomtov said.

In order to build his team, Stark approaches each of the West Coast Avengers and asks them to be part of his new group. Many of the heroes like the idea. The team that is



formed includes U.S.Agent, Spider-Woman, Wonder Man, Scarlet Witch and Stark's alter ego, Iron Man. War Machine, *aka* Jim Rhodes, who wants nothing to do with Stark, doesn't even wait around for an invitation. He leaves at the first sight of Iron Man (during the Avengers East Coast meeting), and will begin his own ongoing series — **WAR MACHINE** — the following month.

"These heroes allow for an interesting team dynamic," Yomtov said. "They are all established heroes in the Marvel Universe by this point, and yet, except for Iron Man, none of them has ever gotten the respect they feel they deserve. They look at Force Works as a chance to make a name for themselves, and if Stark has his way, they will."

EXAMINING THE WORKS

Abnett and Lanning are well versed in the Marvel Universe, thanks to their work in **PUNISHER WAR ZONE**, several Marvel UK series, and the **SCARLET WITCH** limited series. The writing team has some specific ideas on the characters in the series.

"When Andy and I sat down to discuss the Force Works, we discovered that many of these characters were considered to be duplicates of other, more respected characters," Dan Abnett revealed. U.S.Agent is seen as another Captain America, Wonder Man lives in the shadow of the Vision, as does the Scarlet Witch. And Spider-Woman is seen as a female Spider-Man. So we set out to give them their own identities."

"What we attempted to do with each character," Andy Lanning elaborated, "was determine what makes him or her unique. By doing that, we'll be able to dispel the myth that these characters are secondary characters."

"They look at Force Works as a chance to make a name for themselves. . ."

Among changes that will be made are a new uniform for U.S.Agent and the return of his old attitude. "U.S.Agent's most unique attribute, when he was first introduced, was his *attitude*," Abnett said. "In the beginning, he was this belligerent egotist. Over the past couple of years, he's kind of lost that. He's still belligerent, but he's much less sure of himself. We're going to change that — the Agent's ego will be back with a vengeance in **FORCE WORKS**. His new costume will be cutting edge, as well. His shield will be replaced by a Stark Enterprises — created photon-generated one. The shield will be projected out of U.S.Agent's gauntlets and he'll be able to fire photon bolts, as well. Tom Tenney's design on the costume is just outstanding."

According to Yomtov, Scarlet Witch is integral to the series: "When the Avengers West Coast break up, Wanda is really despondent. She feels that she was just coming into her own — after all these years, she had been elected chairman of the team. She's finally come to terms with losing her husband and children. So when Iron Man approaches her for the Force Works team, she joins right away. Stark makes her the team's field leader. While he handles all the team's business, Wanda leads them, including Stark as Iron Man, when they are in action."

"Andy and I have a special fondness for the Scarlet Witch. We've already written a limited series for her, which should be wrapping up just about the time **FORCE WORKS** #1 sees print. The limited series redefined her powers and introduced a new costume for the character. We have big plans for Wanda," Abnett said.

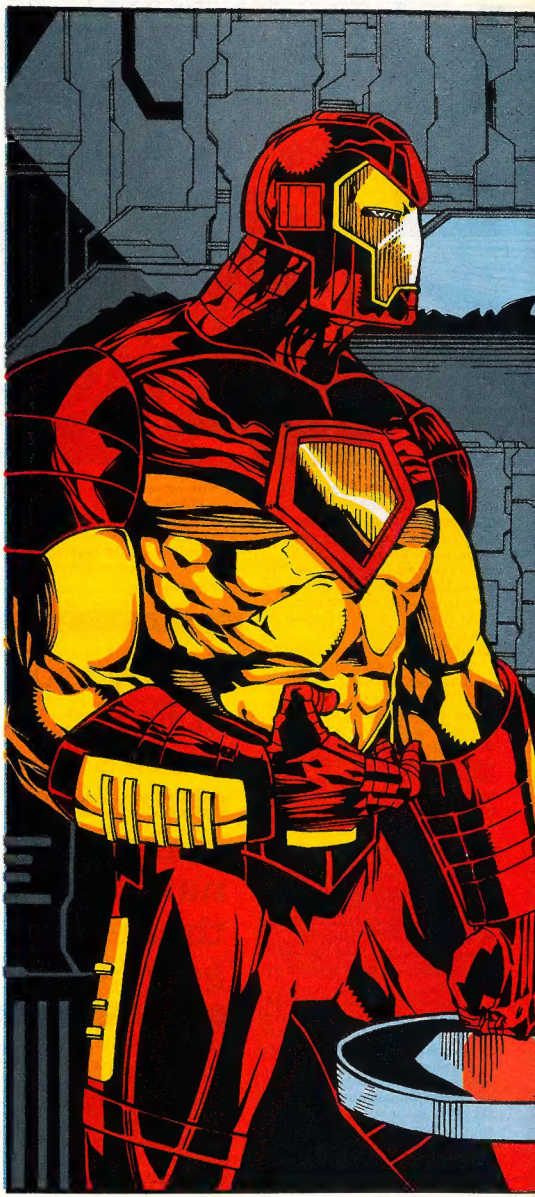
Wanda is integral to the Force Works machinery. "The Force Works computer works on probability," Lanning said, "and so Stark thinks

that he can enhance the computer's operations by tying it into Wanda's mutant power, which controls probabilities. The system wouldn't work the way Stark wants, without Wanda."

As for Iron Man, Yomtov says that Force Works will be very closely tied to Shellhead's own series. "Since I edit both books, I can have [the] reactions to events in [each] series occur in the other book." The most important change for Stark will happen in his own series, as he will once again don the armor, instead of operating it by remote control.

"Spider-Woman was the most difficult for us, as far as changing the character goes," Abnett said. If you look at her, disregarding the spider power, she is an incredibly well-developed character, a very unique one in the Marvel Universe. She's a single mother. She has a very strong personality. She's very family-oriented, and makes her daughter more important than her 'job' as a super hero. In fact, Spider-Woman is asked to join the East Coast Avengers team and turns it down because she doesn't want to uproot her daughter. We've done very little to change Spider-Woman."

"Century is an alien from another dimension. . ."



NEW MEMBERS

In addition to the established characters, Abnett and Lanning have created a *new* hero who will join the team. "Century is an alien from another dimension who appears in issue #1 and then joins the team in the second issue. He adds a lot of power to the team," Yomtov said. "He is very important to our first storyline, where the Kree have sent a hit squad to eliminate members of the Avengers, and chief among them are The Vision and Wonder Man. We're still defining him, so I don't want to reveal too many of his secrets just yet."

Yomtov, Abnett and Lanning all stress that there is one more 'member' of Force Works, the Force Works building itself. "What Andy and I have mapped out is a building that is just a bit ahead of today's technology. We've established that Stark Enterprises has been using this building as a testing ground for their Research and Development Department. If Stark Enterprises has developed it, it's probably functioning or has functioned at Force Works," Abnett said.

Yomtov continued: "The Force Works building is cutting edge. Dan and Andy are trying for a real science fiction feeling. They've done a lot of research into what is happening with such things as virtual reality and artificial intelligence, and are adapting them for the series."

REACTIONS

Nel Yomtov feels that there is a great opportunity for the rest of the Marvel Universe to have strong reactions to the Force Works team. "What we're dealing with here is the *first* Marvel team that will be run as a company. In setting up the team this way, Stark provides such things as a publicity department that will establish Force Works as the name in super teams. So, not only will the Force Works team arrive at a problem spot before other groups — thanks to the computer's ability to predict disasters — there will be media there to cover the event," he explained.

The combination of being *first* on the scene and getting heavy media coverage will cause other super groups to get upset with the team. Chief among these is the Avengers. "What Dan and I want to happen is for The Avengers to keep showing up to stop a certain villain's rampage, just as Force Works is mopping things up," Lanning said. "This kind of thing won't endear them to their old teammates, and then when the cameras show up and ignore the Avengers, well. . ."

Yomtov picked newcomer Tom Tenney as the artist for the series. "Tom is an incredible talent," Yomtov said. "When we first saw his samples, we were completely stunned that no one had grabbed him up. He is going to be a hot talent in the industry very quickly, and he brings just the high-tech feel that I was looking for to the book." Tenney's first work appeared in a U.S.Agent back-up story in this year's **AVENGERS WEST COAST** #100.

Tenney is joined by inker Michael Avon Oeming to form a team that Yomtov predicts will knock the industry on its ear.

Force Works is a completely new concept for a Marvel team, and Abnett and Lanning are enjoying writing the series. "We get together every couple of weeks and plan out what will happen next in the series. We talk for hours and hours about the characters and have produced nearly a ream of ideas for the series," Abnett said. "We have enough ideas to take us well past the book's first year."

They can actually stop disasters *before* they strike.

"**FORCE WORKS** is one of the most exciting and fun projects I've ever worked on," Yomtov said. "I think that the concept is unique in that it [places] established Marvel heroes in a setting that hasn't been approached before. I keep using the term 'cutting edge' to describe the technology in the comic, and I think that the same term applies to the comic [book itself] as well. **FORCE WORKS** is cutting edge. It's the next step in teams in the Marvel Universe. It's produced by one of the most talented groups of creators I have ever worked with, and I think it will be one of the most entertaining comics available today."

The story of the team kicks off in **AVENGERS WEST COAST** #102 and spins off into its own series in January. That's when readers will be able to determine every month if, indeed, Force Works.

– *Randy Meredith*

SPIDER-MAN: THE MUTANT AGENDA

THE *FIRST* STRIP-TO-COMIC CROSSOVER

For more than 15 years, the heroic deeds of the Amazing Spider-Man have graced the comics pages of hundreds of newspapers across the country. These adventures, while not following the continuity established for the comic books, frequently reflect it and guest-star many members of the web-slinger's supporting cast.

Yet, astonishingly enough, "a lot of [fans] don't even know there is a newspaper strip, and a lot of them don't have it in their newspaper," revealed Spider-Man's godfather, Stan Lee. But come December, January, and February, the world becomes witness to the first-ever "crossover" between a daily newspaper strip and a comic book in the hotly-anticipated **SPIDER-MAN: THE MUTANT AGENDA.**

At the core of the tale is the Brand Corporation which, on the surface, is a leader in research into human mutation. But beneath the surface is an agenda that is far more sinister. The Hobgoblin has discovered their true intentions, and is blackmailing the top man in the corporation.

The threat to mutants and the presence of the Hobgoblin attract the attention of the Beast (of the X-Men) and Spider-Man, who proceed (with the help of guest stars — in the first issue of the comic book — Archangel, Rogue, and Bishop) to uncover the tangled truth.

THE BEGINNING

The story *behind* **THE MUTANT AGENDA** began roughly six months ago during conversations between Lee and the folks at King Features, the outfit that syndicates Spider-Man's newspaper adventures. "We thought if we could find a way to make the Spider-Man fans more aware [of the strip], they might enjoy it. And one thing led to another, and we said, 'Wouldn't it be fun to do the same strip in the paper as we do in the comic book, at one time?'" Lee said. Spider-Man Group Editor Danny Fingeroth echoed this sentiment and added, "This was an effort . . . to make a story that could exist in both universes without either one actively contradicting anything in the other." So Fingeroth and Lee began the difficult process of creating parallel stories. Enter writer Steven Grant.

"I was in for the Spider-Man conference last Spring," Grant said, "and Danny kind of looked at me and said, 'got this project that's gonna really be tough. Would you like to work on it?'" Thus began the team's efforts: they worked up a two-page outline which featured both the Beast and the nefarious Hobgoblin, as well as the dastardly doings of the twisted Brand Corporation. Then Lee, Grant, and Fingeroth hammered out any problems with it, and a final plot was decided upon.

Then, the real work began.

THE COMIC STRIP

Lee and Grant agreed that the difficult part of the **MUTANT AGENDA** crossover was the application of the plot to the daily newspaper circumstance. "It's impossible to do it the same in a newspaper strip as in a magazine," Lee explained. "A newspaper strip, . . . has to be so tightly organized, because you're only doing 2 or 3 panels a day. . . .the first panel is really the recapitulation of what has gone before. The second panel moves the story forward a very little bit. And the third panel is like a cliffhanger." So Lee had the complicated task of tackling the agreed upon plot to overcome this handicap.

Spider-Man:
The Mutant Agenda #1
Writer: Steven Grant
Penciler: Scott Kolins
Inker: Sam DeLarosa
Editor: Danny Fingeroth
Price: $1.75
Pages: 32
On Sale: January

Spider-Man:
The Mutant Agenda #3
Writer: Steven Grant
Penciler: Scott Kolins
Inker: Sam DeLarosa
Editor: Danny Fingeroth
Price: $1.75
Pages: 32
On Sale: March

SPIDER-MAN: THE MUTANT AGENDA CROSSOVER GUIDE

In the Newspaper Strip:
Writer: Stan Lee
Artist (dailies): Larry Lieber
Penciler (Sundays): Paul Ryan
Inker (Sundays): Joe Sinnott
Editor: Jay Kennedy
Begins: Monday, December 6
Ends: Third week in February

Spider-Man: The Mutant Agenda #0
Price: $1.25
Pages: 48
On Sale: December

Spider-Man: The Mutant Agenda #2
Writer: Steven Grant
Penciler: Scott Kolins
Inker: Sam DeLarosa
Editor: Danny Fingeroth
Price: $1.75
Pages: 32
On Sale: February

stan's SOAP BOX

Hi, Heroes!

Well, there's a first time for everything! So, let me tell you about our newest precedent-breaking, never-before attempted, merely magnificent Marvel first!

Starting December 6th (be sure to burnish that date forevermore in your brain), Spidey's syndicated comicstrip, which appears in more than five hundred newspapers throughout the world, will present the same three-month-long storyline as the SPIDER-MAN: MUTANT AGENDA limited series which goes on sale in January '94! But, with a difference!

Spidey's newspaper strip will be told from a different angle and in a different style than our Marvel mag. In other words, both the newspaper strip and the comicbook will depict our wondrous web-slinger's encounter with the X-Men's ever-popular Beast and villaindom's ever-loathsome Hobgoblin! That's right; the Beast, Hobgoblin and ol' Webhead together in his newspaper strip!

As you can imagine, it's one of the most difficult projects ever attempted in the history of comicdom. I mean, how do you tell the same story in a newspaper strip, with only two or three panels a day, as you can in three long comicbook issues which can run six or more panels per page? But you know us; the greater the challenge, the faster we tackle it.

Since the whole industry is talking about our sensational little stunt, many of our own bullpenners have asked why it's never been done before. There are two answers. One, nobody's ever thought of it; and two, who else would be batty enough to do it?

Those of you whose local newspaper doesn't offer the Spider-Man strip probably feel culturally deprived. But take heart; there still may be time to get you back into the media mainstream. Just dash off a letter addressed to the "Comics Editor" of your local newspaper, saying that you refuse to dwell in a cultural wasteland any longer; you need your daily dose of Spider-Man. You'd be surprised what a lot of letters from irate readers can accomplish!

By the way, in case you hadn't noticed, we've been bringing Spidey's newspaper strip closer and closer to his own comicbook world. His past strips have guest-starred such Marvel immortals as Dr. Strange, Daredevil, Dr. Doom, the Hulk, Doc Ock, etc. About the only Marvel superstar who hasn't yet appeared in the newspapers is Howard the Duck — but don't despair, you may not have heard the last quack from Howie!

Oh, I musn't forget to tell you — our strip/comicbook team-up is such a spectacular event that big-hearted Marvel is producing an actual comicstrip album [SPIDER-MAN: MUTANT AGENDA #0] which will allow you to collect and save the newspaper strips by pasting them onto album pages, the same way as stamp collectors save their perforated little treasures in stamp albums. Since the Spidey album will be another world-beating "first," you are strongly advised to take good care of yours when you get it. After all, you owe it to posterity!

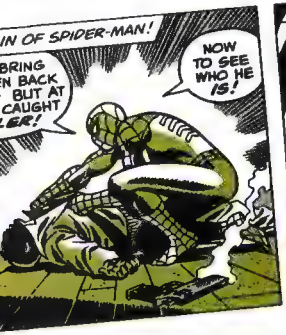
If you've got any questions that my scintillatin' little soapbox hasn't answered for you, feel free to contact Jay Kennedy, Comics Editor, at King Features Syndicate, 216 East 45th Street, New York, NY 10017 (Phone 800/526-5464). Considering how busy he is, he'll kill me for mentioning this, but hey, if you can't stand the heat stay out of comics! Anyway, Jay's a great guy and much of this sensational new project was his idea since Spidey's one of his favorite strips and, big-hearted dude that he is, he wants to be sure that none of you miss it!

So, remember the date. Starting December sixth in newspapers, and January in Spidey's comicbook! Everyone'll be talking about the first comicbook/newspaper innovation in years and we want you to be there at the beginning!

Or, as the Hobgoblin himself might put it, "Experto Credite!"

Excelsior!

Stan



— Stan Lee

AVI ARAD

TAKING MOVIES TV, AND TOYS INTO THE

He strides boldly into the room, a strange figure by typical corporate standards. While other executives wear blue and grey business suits and red and blue ties, he is the man in black and silver — a black western shirt with silver collar points, a black belt with a big silver buckle, black jeans with silver rivets, and black cowboy boots with silver tips. The picture is accented by his long-ish black and silver hair, and Spidey heads that have been soldered onto his collar tips and onto the big silver ring he wears on his right hand.

At 45, Avi is recognized by toy companies and retailers as the leading toy creator in the country. Among his many successes are *My Pretty Ballerina* for Tyco, *Roller Blade Baby* for Mattel, and the *Marvel Super Heroes* action figure line for Toy Biz, Inc., the toy company Marvel Entertainment Group acquired in April. He's been involved in creating video games such as *Videomation* for Nintendo and the hit *X-Men* for Sega Genesis, and television animation projects such as *Conan the Adventurer*, *King Arthur and the Knights of Justice*, *Double Dragon*, and *Bots-Masters*, the first 3-D animated television show. (Over the next year, there are plans for Marvel Comics to publish a BOTS-MASTERS comic book and for Toy Biz to introduce a related toy line.)

Now, he has taken on the challenge of his life. As part of Marvel's agreement to acquire 46 percent of Toy Biz, Avi received a 10 percent ownership position, in exchange for working exclusively for Toy Biz. "One of the most fun things about this new position," Avi said, "is that I get to work with Stan Lee, Tom DeFalco, and the other editors, guiding the Marvel characters as they relate to toys, films, television, and video games.

"I like to try everything and anything that's creative and different," he said in a warm, soft voice — almost a whisper. "It's like a roller coaster; scary when you get on, scarier on the way up, and even scarier on the way down again. But that's what I like to do.

"I took the Marvel job because I was fascinated by the long-lasting success of the Marvel Universe. I said to myself, 'everything starts with the story.' Well, Marvel has great stories." He continued, "The incredible thing about Marvel characters is that, after 30 and 50 years, they are still here, appealing to kids and adults,

"When you are talking about Marvel Comics, there's no reason to change the material."

not for nostalgic reasons, but for Marvel's great ongoing entertainment appeal. These characters are as contemporary today as they were years ago. When you start from scratch, you never know how long-lasting it will be. As a matter of a fact, most new creations don't last long enough to become pop culture icons like the Marvel Universe.

"That's important because we have the potential to create franchise movies, video games, and other forms of entertainment. The same as we publish ongoing series of comics, we would like to produce ongoing series of movies, video games, toys, etc., that are driven by the characters in the comic book titles. So we want to do it right in order to have a nice, long run," he noted.

As most fans know, the super hero landscape of films is marked with disappointments such as *Howard the Duck*, *Captain America*, or *Batman Returns*, as well as great successes like the *Hulk* live action TV show, the first *Batman* movie, and the *X-Men* television show. "People who have gone wrong in the past looked at a super hero and said, 'let's use the comic book as a starting point and change it for the medium that we're working on.' I believe that comic books are non-animated, animated stories that lend themselves to all forms of entertainment, such as feature films, animated shows, and video games," he said. "And

when you are talking about Marvel Comics, there's no reason to change the material. It's successful. It's time-tested. What we need to do is adapt it to other media."

He cites the X-Men live action film that Fox plans to produce: "We do not want a new X-Men. We want our beloved X-Men, but on the big screen, in live action. I say, the story is already written, right from the Marvel books. Our job is to take the elements that are already in the books and bring them to life in a believable way."

The advantage, according to Avi, is that Marvel super heroes have well defined characters. "We all know *Spider-Man* and what he does, so it is easy to make toys and video games — anything that gives you the ability to role-play your favorite hero. There is no reason to recreate what's there.

"Take Ghost Rider," he said, his face lit up with excitement. "This story has always been a most compelling one. Ghost Rider is a frightening vigilante on the outside, but a terribly tormented soul on the inside, torn between the devil and life.

lenge. "I'm trying to steer away from doing a movie about Wolverine because the whole X-Men concept is so much richer," Avi explained. "The problem is that you need so long to explain who mutants are, what they are doing, and all their individual personalities. You need a way to go *boom, boom, boom* and get right into a story."

His idea: *The Dirty Dozen* — a 1967 movie about a rag-tag group of soldiers given a reprieve from their prison sentences if they would undertake a suicide mission behind enemy lines. "*The Dirty Dozen* concept," Avi explained, "would allow us to quickly introduce Professor X and all the X-Men in a hunt to find Wolverine and get him to become a team player — which is not exactly what he does — because his strength and strength of will is necessary to help the mutants, who are a hunted minority themselves."

Ultimately, in anything that he undertakes, Avi relies on his instincts — an uncanny ability to sense what kids and the marketplace will want.

control, and that makes them feel good. "If you know what you are doing," Avi continued, "you can translate this feeling into an action figure. Kids then take the figure and they bash him like this and like that. That's how kids conquer their fears, as long as, in the end, they can win, put their heads up and feel like they accomplished something. We want to channel that feeling through our toys, television shows, and so forth."

This kind of "channeling," Avi pointed out, can be made to work for adults, too. "One of my favorite movies is *City Slickers*," Avi recalled. "You could have laughed your head off or you could have cried like a baby. But you wouldn't have been laughing or crying at the movie itself — it would be at some personal memory or feeling that the movie evoked. It all depends which part of the movie hit you. So if you give adults something that they can role play, they will get into it, too."

Super heroes, particularly Marvel super heroes, are especially good "channeling" for kids and adults, ac-

MARVE

You cannot rewrite this story. There's no reason to develop the character — he's already developed. Just tell a good story that we all know and love."

However, Avi recognizes something he calls "dimensional confusion" — a kind of reality gap that occurs the second you dress a man or a woman in spandex, use special effects to give them super powers, and have them save the world in front of a camera. "If I wore a red cape and ran through the New York City streets, it would look juvenile," Avi elaborated. What has to be done is to create an environment so compelling that the result is to suspend disbelief and automatically place the audience in the "super hero dimension," without giving anybody a chance to question. "You have to do what Jack Nicholson did as Joker in *Batman*," Avi said. "He created a character so colorful on its own that nothing could destroy it. Or you have to do what director Tim Burton did with Michael Keaton as Batman. Burton created the kind of visual excitement that bypassed everything. You didn't have to know anything about Batman to understand him."

The *X-Men* live action film presents such a "dimensional confusion" chal-

"I am very lucky," said Avi. "I've been more right than wrong. You see, kids want to accomplish something. They want to be heroic. They want to believe that good conquers evil. And by evil, I don't mean religious evil. Evil is whatever fear they want to conquer. The fantasy is in solving the problem in a heroic way."

Avi uses this theory to explain the incredible popularity of Venom. "Kids like Venom because he is very powerful," Avi said. "But, for the same reason, they are also afraid of him. They like to see Spider-Man win against Venom in some way. And the bigger the villain — in this case Venom — the bigger the hero, Spider-Man." This creates a sense of

cording to Avi. "Being a Marvel super hero doesn't mean you go through life without trouble!" he explained. "On the contrary, it makes you more vulnerable. And that's the kind of thing we can all relate to."

In the animated series, Avi wants to capture the feeling that anybody could be Spider-Man. "Peter Parker has all this supposed power as Spider-Man," Avi explained, "but he still goes back to his little apartment, to his job, and his editor gives him a rough time over the pictures he took. You don't physically have to be able to climb a building the same as Spider-Man does. As a kid, you climb a building every day. You get

up in the morning, go to school and get pushed around. In your own way, you face the same challenges as Spider-Man."

Avi is currently utilizing his unique approach to develop a number of film and television projects — though he was quick to note that many are in the very early stages and are subject to major changes before they reach the public.

LIVE ACTION FILMS

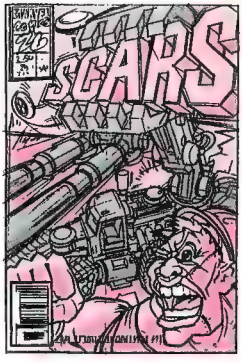
X-MEN: A live action *X-Men* feature film is being developed by Marvel in conjunction with 20th Century Fox, producers of the animated television series. "The gut appeal for the X-Men is them being the outcasts, the minority, the underdogs that people love to see win," Avi said.

Avi painted a scenario similar to that of the animated *X-Men* show: "It's almost Nazi Germany with the mutants as Jews. I guess the idea stems from my normal Jewish background and paranoia. And there are a lot of parallels — mutants as minorities, generations of mutant

SPIDER-MAN: The live action *Spider-Man* film is to be written and directed by James Cameron of *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* fame. As reported in the September 1, 1993, issue of *Daily Variety*, the film is "in early production stages at Carolco," and the first draft of the script has been completed.

"The movie business, as we all know, is complicated. But with a little bit of luck, *Spider-Man* could be on the screen Christmas of '95," Avi said. "Jim Cameron has a pretty clear vision of what he wants to do. "Peter Parker is a kid who can do all this incredible stuff, but he can't capitalize on it. He has a normal life on one hand, and on the other hand, he is the ultimate super hero.

"The gut appeal of Spider-Man is that 'with great power comes great responsibility.' You have to learn to live with the fact that you are very special, but you're not special enough to capitalize on it. Someone might be the strongest man in the world, but you are not going to be a prize fighter because you're going to



development. On one hand, it emphasizes the very human and "magical" drama of Stephen Strange's falling from the heights of society, where he was a wealthy, powerful surgeon, to ultimate humility at the feet of his mentor, The Ancient One, and then rebuilding his life, becoming the Master of the Mystic Arts.

On the other hand, Avi calls for the film to end with "one of the most incredible sequences of special effects in the history of movies" as Dr. Strange battles Mephisto, each one growing larger and larger as their battle rages. "Can you imagine, with today's special effects, what we can do with that?" Avi posed.

"Dr. Strange is a guy who must go through a transformation. Here's a guy who was on top of the world, a super star. Dr. Strange, the surgeon, was not ready to get the great powers bestowed upon him because he was just interested in money and status. Then he changed completely."

L AGE!

as a minority. We want to show that the X-Men characters are complex and real. We want to show the love triangle of Cyclops, Jean and Logan.

The *X-Men* live action film presents. . .a "dimensional confusion" challenge.

And a very big part of it would be to show the origin of Wolverine in the Weapon X program. That would lend itself to technologically advanced special effects."

HULK: Marvel is developing a live action *Hulk* feature film with Universal, the studio that did the live action television series. "We want to do the new Hulk, the talking Hulk, the smart Hulk," Avi explained. Avi would like the movie to be high-tech with heavy use of animatronics and incredible morphing special effects. "At heart, it would be the story of Hulk's origin," Avi explained, "when Bruce Banner tries to save Rick Jones from being hurt by the Gamma Bomb and then Banner becomes the Hulk. The gut appeal of the Hulk is as the ultimate victim of his act of bravery."

kill someone. So you cannot use it. You cannot go and get endorsements being Spider-Man because no one will believe who you are, the ultimate super hero for kids — the ultimate fantasy — but the way Marvel does it. And there are some morals. The more I get into it, I see how Spider-Man has never killed anybody. People have only died in accidents."

BLADE: A live action *Blade* movie is in final negotiations. Avi wants this one to be a different, cult-like film with an "edgy" feel that will appeal to teenagers and young adults. "Blade is a fascinating story," Avi explained. "He is a vampire killer on a quest to find his mother, who was a vampire, and possibly his father."

Avi said he would like to make the film colorful, frightening, and moody. His vision calls for an Anne (*Interview With A Vampire*) Rice-like world where the undead live side-by-side unknowing humans. "There are going to be vampire bars, where vampires meet and date," Avi explained. "And, being part vampire, Blade is going to know when he is near one."

DR. STRANGE: Avi has a specific vision for this film, currently in

ANIMATED SERIES

SPIDER-MAN: In addition to the *X-Men* [which has been extended by an additional 52 episodes over the 1993-94 seasons], Marvel Films is producing a half-hour Saturday morning *Spider-Man* animated television series for Fox that is scheduled to debut in next fall ('94). "This is the single largest television effort on our part right now," Avi explained. "It's

expensive and it'll be a no-holds-barred show. Marvel is Spider-Man and Spider-Man is Marvel. There's an enormous amount of thinking, pre-production, talking to special effects people, and trying to figure out what to do."

Avi envisions a classic show with lots of special effects "that kids will love. One of the things that the *Batman* animated show did was a stylistic shadow effect," Avi explained. "*Spider-Man* is going to be from the point of view of heights. *Spider-Man* is going to be big, up front, very close to the skin. I don't want to call it 3-D, but we want to bring a 'Spider-Man is coming at you' effect. The coloration will be outrageous."

Avi is also considering different ways to present Peter Parker and his alter-ego: "We're able to take a new approach with computer animation. We have been looking at an effect that when Spider-Man comes down and lands, he morphs into Peter Parker. There will be new Spider-Man sound effects and music. He's going to have a spider-sense — an

"*Iron Man and Force Works* will allow me to use computer animation in an inexpensive way to get incredible effects."

image of what's behind him, similar to the way they created the invisible Predator image in those movies. We're actually introducing a new effect called 'Spider Vision,' which shows how Spider-Man has a different visual perspective. Physically Spider-Man will be highly flexible, like an insect. And we're going to give him some muscle structure, which may be a big adjustment. He's always been such a skinny neighborhood kid."

Stories will feature Spider-Man's classic villains, such as Doctor Octopus, and eventually newer ones, such as Venom and Carnage. "This show has to bring a whole new feeling to television," Avi said. "So I want *Spider-Man* to be very story-driven. I also want *Spider-Man* to sparkle. In order to make it a cultural icon for today's [audience], display technology will be very important."

IRON MAN AND FORCE WORKS: The next animated show Avi would like to develop is *Iron Man and Force Works*, with War Machine playing a prominent role. FORCE WORKS is the new comic book replacing WEST COAST AVENGERS.

"I'm excited about *Iron Man* because it will make the most incredible toys, television, and video games ever considered," Avi said. "Iron Man and War Machine are Transformers come to life. They create their own arsenal. You add some attachments and they can become a jet, a submarine or a space ship. The concept will allow me to use computer animation in an inexpensive way to get incredible effects."

"Iron Man has been around for 30 years, selling hundreds of thousands of comic books every month," Avi explained. "The concept for this show is high-tech that combines a visual newness and 30 years of legacy into one. Iron Man, and War Machine, are real people who are technologically augmented. Under their armor, they are vulnerable, just like all of us.

Avi sees Iron Man as being very relevant to today's audiences. "Iron Man is not super human — he's a regular person — but with technology, education, inventiveness, computer science, and so on," Avi explained. "He's capable of being anything he wants to be. He is able to use his head to fight real causes, and the show can deal with real causes absolutely head-on. Iron Man can deal with pollution, deal with weapons, and ozone layers.

"Think about it: On one hand, we're dismantling the world's arsenal. On the other, we're making weapons accessible to all the wrong people. You really need a private inventor/creator like Anthony Stark who, as Iron Man, can counter balance a highly technical society that is capable of anything and everything."

Iron Man's villains are vital, too, Avi said, using Anthony Stark's competitor Stane, as an example. "Stane got Stark's company, then lost it," Avi explained. "But before he gave it back, Stane made a copy of every file, every CD-ROM and every program on every computer. So he can create weapons close to or equal that of Iron Man and War Machine."

SCARs: *SCARs* is the first truly integrated project that Avi is working on where he is trying to develop a new concept comic book, toy line and animated television show at the same time.

"It's like the movies *Mad Max* and *The Road Warrior*," Avi said. "I have this thing about the world after the great cataclysm [that left] us with no energy or transportation, and humans. . .enslaved by this hybrid cyborg culture. There are all these scavengers searching through junk yards to create machinery and weapons. They would take the front of a tractor, the back end of a Cadillac, and the engine from a Lear jet, and, suddenly, we have this incredible machine. In the final analysis I am creating a line of Lego vehicles."

SCARs gets its name from the crude welds used to connect these giant pieces of machinery. "Unlike other comic books or television animation, *SCARs* would take place on the highways," Avi explained. "It'll be a never-ending fight, the good guys against the bad guys, with teenagers driving these really cool machines. The bad guys could be people that are mutated because they all got exposed to the sun or under pressure from living underground.

"The treatment came out terrific, thanks to Larry Hama [of **WOLVERINE** and **G.I. JOE**], who wrote a great story," Avi said.

TOYS

Going back to his roots, Avi is actively working to create a number of toy concepts that are still in the very beginning days on the drawing board. Some of his current projects include:

STEEL MUTANTS: With the Toy Biz *X-Men* action figures gaining increasing popularity, Avi is introducing (in January 1994) a line of die-cast metal X-Men figures called *Steel Mutants*, with six figures for the initial introduction. Each will be two inches tall, fully painted, with movable arms and waists.

POCKET COMICS: Pocket Comics are mini-comic book sets, approximately two inches wide, three inches tall, and one inch deep, complete with miniature action figures. There will be an authentic replica of an existing comic book cover on the outside, and inside a mini-world of action figures and play sets, bringing the action figure to life. For example, Wolverine might come with the Danger Room. Spider-Man might come with a building from which he can swing. The backgrounds will connect with each other to form a larger scenario. Plans call for eight different Pocket Comics, featuring two mini-action figures each, to ship February 1994.

ANIMATORS: There is a Wolverine action figure with a tiny, battery-powered projection device in its chest — that's an *Animator*. When you turn it on, the device projects a short scene of Wolverine from the X-Men television show. Animators are expected to begin shipping March 1994.

GHOST RIDER

There are lots of other possible projects Avi is working to advance, but his dream project, the one he would like to move from idea to reality, is a live-action *Ghost Rider* movie. "If I had my druthers to do anything in the world today, it would be to direct *Ghost Rider*," Avi said. "It doesn't have anything to do with my interest in motorcycles. It has to do with what I call the ultimate justice system.

"I believe you can't inflict pain in this world without worrying about repercussions. To me, the whole Ghost Rider legacy is that innocent blood is going to breed more blood. So, instead of a real-life vigilante, who breaks the law, Marvel created in Ghost Rider a vigilante that's your worst nightmare. Not only that, but he's on the side of God — or whatever higher authority you believe in. What I love about it is the singleness — that you cannot get away with it because there is a higher authority here that had to have created the Ghost Rider."

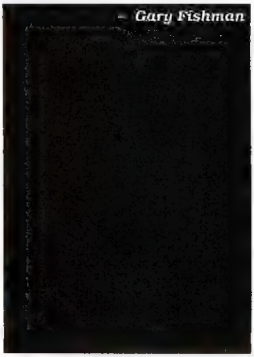
The story of Ghost Rider, as Avi envisions it for a movie, is that teenager Dan Ketch and his sister stumble upon two rival gangs in a cemetery. They hurt Dan's sister. Dan tries to escape, taking her to a nearby junk yard where she dies in his arms. The criminals approaching, Dan tries to escape again. His hand, covered in his sister's blood, briefly touches a strange motorcycle gas cap. Suddenly Dan is transformed into the Spirit of Vengeance.

"I can sit here today and draw a poster for the movie," Avi said. "I can see Danny Ketch standing in the junk yard, holding his sister, who is bleeding. In the sky behind them, there is a huge ghost-like skull in flames with just the hint of Ghost Rider's skull-faced, high-tech motorcycle. How a single drop of blood is going to activate Ghost Rider because Danny's sister never should have died.

"Ghost Rider can be a statement of our time that, handled right, could have the same effect as Charles Bronson's *Death Wish* movies or when Clint Eastwood said 'Make my day.' While we're tired of that kind of vigilante, Ghost Rider offers us a new way of looking at it."

A new way for looking at it — Avi Arad's goal for his film, television, and toy projects. That's the perspective he uses to bring the Marvel characters to life in the many realms of the entertainment industry.

Steel Mutant prototypes



Gary Fishman

THE CLANDESTINE

Children of the Djinn

Born of the human and the unworldly, there is a family of seemingly immortal superhumans with remote branches across the globe. They live in the shadows. Suddenly, they find themselves being attacked and killed by an unknown power, forcing them to pool their resources, identify their foe, and fight back. Their weapons are abilities they've inherited from their parents, and their agenda is one of survival.

This is the backdrop for the dramatic new four-issue limited series created, written, and pencilled by ***EXCALIBUR*** *co-creator Alan Davis. It is called* ***THE CLANDESTINE****, and the origins of the series are in many ways as complex as the origins of the characters themselves:*

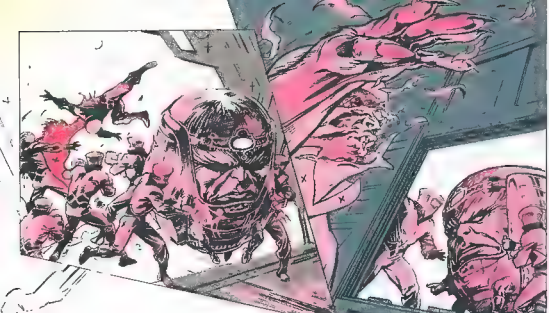
Back in the early 1980s Marvel UK was publishing a succession of weekly comics featuring Captain Britain in his pre-**EXCALIBUR** days. The artist on the strip, doing his first work in comics, was Alan Davis. The man who hired him was UK Editor in Chief Paul Neary.

The Captain flourished, and all concerned went their separate ways to make names for themselves as freelancers: Davis as artist and later writer/artist on **EXCALIBUR**; Neary as penciler on **CAPTAIN AMERICA** and **KA-ZAR**, and Alan's inker on **EXCALIBUR**.

Flash forward to 1993, and the boys are back in London town: Neary, in his Marvel UK editor in chief role again, invites Davis to create a new super hero title for the home boys. The results will be seen beginning in December with a one-shot preview magazine, then a four-issue limited series commencing in January, which in turn leads into an ongoing series soon thereafter.

Welcome to the **CLANDESTINE**.

How did the Davis/Neary/Marvel UK reunion come about? Editor Neary cited geography, history, and logic as the major factors: "It gradually evolved. It wasn't so much that we lured him to work for us, it's just that logic was there that he would work with us." For Davis, trust and the "feel-good factor" played the most important part: "Of all the people who offered me work after I left **EXCALIBUR**, Paul was a friend I had had a long relationship with, and someone I could feel comfortable working with."



Neary leans toward describing his role as that of "facilitator," and explains, "My job here is to make sure that nothing gets in Alan's way of pushing for the highest quality available. I've given him a free rein and it's his baby."

"Paul said that I could do whatever I wanted," Davis said. "But he would prefer it if I was to create a super hero group. I like the super hero genre, so that wasn't a restriction. After a process of elimination I came up with the idea for the **CLANDESTINE** — a family [hence the "Clan" Destine] with super-human abilities who use their powers for their own gratification, and don't feel any responsibility to go out and save the world or do traditional super hero stuff."

This doesn't sound like a super *hero* group. "They're definitely not super 'heroes' in a conventional sense. It is just a convenient tag to say they're heroes because they will be the good guys. Although the principles of right and wrong will blur at times, because the Clan haven't all taken the oath to save the world and not to kill anyone, or anything like that." What makes the family become a group? "The children. They have not yet become jaded by life and they want to do good. So they are the catalyst that stimulates the Clan into action. They bring the family, which has been around for a long time, out of hiding to interact inside the Marvel Universe."

But this doesn't mean the Clan will be mixing it with the X-ers or Captain America and crew? "I've got no plans for regularly using other Marvel characters except in necessary cameo roles. In the first issue AIM, Modok, and the Silver Surfer appear in very small but essential roles. I really want to carry on as I did working on **EXCALIBUR**, which is basically that there won't be crossovers or storylines jumping from an issue of the ClanDestine to another comic. Everything you need to know about the ClanDestine, who are all-new characters, will be in the **CLANDESTINE** comic," Davis promised.

If the series is going to be all but self-contained, why bother tying it into the Marvel Universe at all? "Because it does give you a rich heritage to draw on. When you come up with a totally new universe, you can't just use a Silver Surfer or Modok equivalent for one or two pages and never use them again without lots of explanation. In the Marvel Universe, I can, because anyone who reads Marvel Comics knows who the Silver Surfer and Modok are."

WHO'S WHO

With the Clan's collective identity set, Davis was then able to work out who the individual family members are. "I subdivided the group, thinking what basic elements you need in a family. Most families have a dynamic, so I attributed each one of the characters a role inside that dynamic," he asserted. Although there are other relatives around and there is a "swing door" policy when it comes to team members, Davis has ended up with a regular cast of seven.

"The three main characters are the teenaged twins and their guardian. The twins are self-styled super heroes — the boy is called *Crimson Crusader*, the girl is called *Imp*. Out of costume the girl is Pandora, the boy is Rory. They're very *gung ho*; they want to be super heroes because they suddenly woke up one morning and found out that they had developed super powers. Walter, their adult brother and guardian, is the big strong guy. He will be called *Wallop* when he takes on his super-huge configuration," he said.

Their relatives, all brothers and sisters except for their parents, have names and powers which, according to Alan, "evolve from the character or what the character would do." Making up the remainder of the core team are: *Vex*, who "doesn't like people: he doesn't like his family, he doesn't like civilization, he just wants to be completely on his own. The reason Vex wants to be on his own is because he is hyper-sensitive — he hears, sees, smells *everything* to an extreme degree. He can feel vibrations off everything. When he's standing next to you, he is aware of the sound of your heart and he can hear the blood surging through your veins. Basically, he is pretty 'round the bend because he has just got too much stimuli overwhelming him at all times. He's not a maniac; he has been driven slightly mad by what he knows, but it's in more of an eccentric way than in a 'ga-ga' way. Vex isn't mad — he's sane; he's just manic in his personality because of the way that his brain and his senses work."

Alan continued: "There is also one called *Argent*, an artist — a sculptress — who has the ability to project a metallic protoplasm. She coats herself and other things. She

is the Bohemian member of the family." The sixth member is "a woman who basically has telepathic powers called *Kimeara* (thus, that is her code name). Kimeara's really crucial to the whole story and the way that it works," he said, smiling, and adding that he didn't want to give away any more about this mysterious and pivotal player.

"Then there is the father, who is simply Adam Destine — he doesn't have a code name. He is totally human, although he has had a longer-than-human life and is jaded with existence," Alan elaborated. "He is not impervious to pain. He doesn't have a lot of time for humanity or anything to do with it because, having been around for a long time, he sees it as a mindless cycle. He doesn't see any higher aspirations in civilization; he sees civilization on a downward spiral.

"[Adam's] powers were bestowed on him. His spouse just gave him powers, simple as that." Adam's wife is the person responsible for the fact that the offspring have powers, for, as Alan revealed, "their mother is not human, but her true nature is one of the many mysteries that surround the Clan. She is not one of the main characters; she just pops up now and then. The actual stories are structured around the children and the mother is not really crucial to the story. Besides, she doesn't have a name yet!" Helpless laughter accompanied this last revelation, followed by a serious point: "There are certain areas where I would rather not be too specific at the moment, not because I haven't got ideas but because of the amount of times I have had to change names and basic premises — as soon as I have got something developed, someone else goes into print with a similar idea. So I want to keep my options open."

Asked if he could reveal anything about the villain of the series, Alan stated, "No, because the bad guy is the mystery that is only going to be revealed in the fourth issue." Is he an already established Marvel character? "No."

Alan explained the process he went through to develop and name his cast: "Paul gave me the listing of all character names at Marvel as of the 2nd January '93: at that point Marvel America had on file 2,600 names in use, and that's not counting all the ones used by independent companies and DC! There just aren't that many great names left. Even now, there is a character for whom I've come up with a new name because the name that I've used so far apparently already has been used. In the content of a good story, the powers thing isn't really important — the powers, the costume, the names are incidental to good strong characters."

THE CLANDESTINE's delineator is very happy with the way things are going and relations with the publishers are at an all-time high. "Paul is doing everything he can to encourage me," Davis confirmed, "so basically I feel pampered and spoilt and cared for, and I think that is what an editor should do. I feel good."

The inker for the series is Mark Farmer, Davis's long-time collaborator on **EXCALIBUR**. Asked what brought the two together again, Alan noted, "He doesn't cry when I tell him to do something again. [Laughter] The truth of it is that I think I am really difficult to work with and for me to get someone who can ink as well as Mark and to get on with him at the same time is pretty difficult. I was lucky when I had Paul for as long as I did. I think that anyone who is willing to work with me is asking for trouble, anyway, because I'm very obsessive. Apart from that, Mark's a really good inker, and he's a friend.

"I sometimes feel bad, because if there's something I don't like, I'll criticize it, but I'll often forget to say something good, because I expect it. It works both ways, and Mark is not frightened to say to me, 'I think that what you've done there looks wrong.' You do need someone who cares enough about what you're doing."

Editor Neary is so pleased with the results that the series will be released as four, 32-page standard $1.95 Marvel UK comic books with no cover enhancements. "In view of the strong storyline, we felt that this would appeal to the grass roots comics reader, and we wanted to direct ourselves to giving the best possible value that we could, making it as accessible as we can to the broadest possible audience.

He added, "It's been excellent working with Alan. He has his own way of telling a story which is very solid, he thinks everything through and he is very meticulous about whatever he does. Alan set out to make **THE CLANDESTINE** a very, very unusual super hero title while maintaining the traditional elements which make super heroes so exciting for the readers, and the way it's shaping up it's going to tick like a Swiss watch and look stunning. You can quote me on that."

– Alan Woollcombe

Hot Sheet

Ho! Ho! Ho! It's that time of year again, time to think about what gifts to leave under the Christmas Tree or to dole out during the seven nights of Chanukah, and this Holiday season, Marvel has a whole sled full of hot stuff guaranteed to melt the chilliest December frost! But with so much great booty to choose from, even Santa Claus needs a guide to help him match the perfect gift to each deserving Marvel elf.

FOR THE READER ON YOUR LIST

This year the holiday season will be one for the record books! Just a quick glance at the line-up of goodies that hit the shelf in time for Christmas is enough to make any elf's head spin. Highlights of the special books that Marvel plans to release include the Spider-Man and Ghost Rider **SPIRITS OF VENOM** trade paperback, four **MARVEL MASTERWORKS** volumes (#24-27, featuring the Uncanny X-Men, the Fantastic Four, the Avengers, and the Mighty Thor), a **WOLVERINE** and **GHOST RIDER** trade paperback, a collection of the Peter David/Sam Kieth *Wolverine* adventures from **MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS**, a collection of the first four issues of **X-MEN ADVENTURES** (based on the animated series), the **PUNISHER HOLIDAY SPECIAL** and the ever-popular **MARVEL HOLIDAY SPECIAL**.

An eighty-page comic book, this year, the **HOLIDAY SPECIAL** will feature an Incredible Hulk story penned by Peter David and drawn by Ron Lim, and a Nick Fury tale by Howard Chaykin. What a stocking stuffer!

STYLIN' AND PROFILIN'

As a look inside any comic book store, game store, or department store will show, there's a lot more to Marvel these days than just comic books. In fact, through the Hulk-like efforts of Marvel's Consumer Products Department, holiday shoppers will see a Marvel logo or character popping up just about anywhere, in any store at the mall.

"There are two major product line areas that we'll be focusing on this holiday," Maggie Trujillo of Marvel Consumer Products stated. "One is the *X-Men Mutant Gear* line and the other is the *Marvel Classic* line. Most of the items in both lines are brand new and we're really excited about everything being produced. You'll definitely see a whole new look for items bearing a Marvel logo or character. . .a new level of style and sophistication."

According to Maggie, there will be just about anything a Marvel fan could hope for on the shelves this year. "The *Marvel Classic* line will feature a variety of characters who'll pop up on clothes, accessories, and even bedding. Of course, there will also be more traditional products like books, video tapes (there will be four more *X-Men* videos — from the TV series — on the shelves by holiday time). . .the types of things that people are always looking for.

"The *X-Men Mutant Gear* line will offer shoppers and fans a whole new type of merchandise based on our popular mutants. The line will include everything from apparel to party goods to sheets and pillowcases to towels. But it's not just character slapping, where we take an X-Men and put him or her on a T-shirt. The intent was to create products based on what you see in the X-Men books, what the X-Men might actually wear or use — adaptations of types of jackets, clothes, accessories that the characters are seen in, all with the distinctive X-Men logo and look. The idea here is that you're not just wearing the X-Men on your back, but that you're actually becoming part of the team and staying fashionable at the same time."

"The MARVEL CLASSICS line will feature a variety of characters who'll pop up on clothes, accessories, and even bedding."

PLAYING FOR KEEPS

Alan Gordon, also of Marvel's Consumer Products Department, suggested that shoppers head for the toy store while they're out looking for that perfect present for the Marvel fan on anyone's gift list. "Any place that sells action figures, PVC's [plastic figures], toys, and video games are going to be swamped by Marvel fans. There's a lot to choose from — every product is loads of good fun, and we stay true to what's created in the comic books."

Alan also commented that, in the past, most Marvel-based toys have headed the fan's gift list. "The [Toy Biz] X-Men action figures are the best figures known to man and there will be a whole lot more figures to choose from this year. And they're great! Besides the classic X-Men characters that you'd expect to see on the shelves, there will be a few unexpected characters popping up as well. For example, there will be a Strong Guy figure for the X-Factor character set, and one for the mutant known as Tusk. These characters aren't as widely known as those who appear every Saturday on the *X-Men* animated show, but they're such great looking figures that you won't be able to pass them up. There will also be a new X-Force line of figures which will include a new Cable figure as well as a Cannonball, and Grizzly figure (to name just a few). The whole line looks good. Each figure has a unique action tailored to the character and the sculpting used to cast the toys is top-notch."

Another new toy to hit the stores this year is an all-new *Micro Machine* line of vehicles. "These are pretty neat," Alan stated. "The vehicles are from the same manufacturer made famous by the fast-talking spokesperson in their unique commercials, so you can expect a high quality toy. There will be two separate *Spider-Man Micro Machine* collections as well as a must have *X-Men* collection."

Finally, no holiday shopping list would be complete without something extra-special for the video game enthusiast of the house (of which there is usually, two, three, or more). "The Sega Genesis and Super Nintendo video game systems have really brought our characters to life and put players in the thick of the action," Alan pointed out. "All of our previous releases have been hits, and the games lined up for this winter will be smashes as well. Kicking it off will be an all-new *Hulk* video game for the Sega Genesis from US Gold. Talk about smash! Sega will also release a specially enhanced version of the *Spider-Man* Plus, Tiger Games brings the *X-Men* to a hand-held game for those who like to play on the road."

The MARVEL CLASSICS clothing features all of Marvel's top characters, including The X-Men, The Punisher, Ghost Rider, and everyone's favorite web-spinner, Spider-Man.

video game cartridge for their CD system and Acclaim Software will be doing a Genesis version of their previously released *X-Men/Spider-Man* game. And, in the "turnabout-is-fair play" department, Software Toolworks will be transferring their popular *Captain America/Avengers* game, already available for the Genesis, to the Super NES system.

MUTANT GEAR: "all with the distinctive X-Men logo and look."

FOR THE COLLECTOR IN ALL OF US

Video games are hot, clothes are cool, and comics are what made Marvel famous, but the comic book fan's holiday just wouldn't be complete without some new twists on some classic stocking stuffers. Bob Budiansky, Marvel's Executive Editor in charge of Special Projects, provided the following rundown of what fans can expect to see stacked on the counters of their favorite comics specialty store. "This season, we're focusing on showcasing great art, and we'll be presenting it in some new as well as classic ways. For instance, there will be four new posters out in time for the holidays, all by the artists most associated with the characters presented. Mark Texiera will put the edge in Christmas with his *Sabertooth* poster, Lee Weeks charges up *Gambit*, Frank Miller takes to the rooftops with *Daredevil*, and the *Midnight Sons* gather together courtesy of Ron Garney. In addition, Joe Jusko puts his paints in action for a second set of *Marvel Masterpiece* cards, and is joined by a passel of other talented painters like Michael Kaluta, Bill Sienkiewicz, and Jim Steranko; and we'll be turning Jim Lee's artwork from the first set of *X-Men* trading cards into three poster books. Finally, we're going to try something completely new and different when we release some of the art from *X-Men Trading Cards Series II* as a set of over-sized heavy stock placards. Talk about something worth framing and hanging over the mantle!"

SOME HOT SHEET RECOMMENDATIONS

• Tom Lyle, SPIDER-MAN artist: "I hear they're taking some of my SPIDER-MAN and VENOM covers and turning them into t-shirts. . . now what could be more stylish! And if anyone wants to send me a gift, I think the wool Spidey Jacket (which happens to sport a Mark Bagley Spider-Man) would look great on me."

• Jeff Grubb, TSR fantasy novelist: "Video games are great, and I play plenty of them, but for sheer enjoyment nothing beats a live opponent. So if you find a copy of the MARVEL SUPER-HERO ROLE PLAYING GAME under the tree, you've got it made. Getting together with friends for a night of MARVEL SH is a whole different experience. You actually become part of the Marvel Universe."

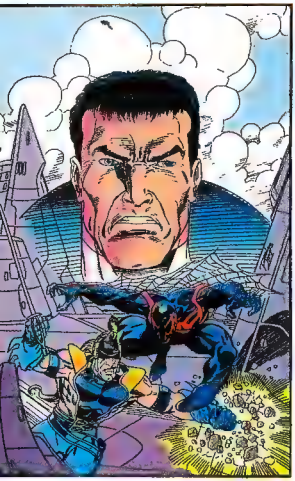
• Joe Kubert, TOR writer/artist: "If you want to get something for the budding comics creator on your list, the first thing that comes to mind are the books that influenced me when I was an aspiring artist — Hal Foster's *Prince Valiant* and *Tarzan* collections, Alex Raymond's *Flash Gordon*, and Milton Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates*. These works are ageless. If a person wanted to learn the finer points of storytelling, composition, and artistry, not much teaches it better than these books."

• Scott Hanna, SPIDER-MAN inker: "There are a lot of things that you could get for some one who wants to be a comic book artist, from high quality pen or brush sets found in art supply stores to books about the craft of drawing and anatomy. One book that is especially good for budding inkers is *Rendering in Pen and Ink* by Watson Guptil."

— *Jerry Novick*

IT'S HAMMER TIME

Inside the 2099 crossover



The heroes of the 2099 Universe will finally meet this December in what will be the line's very first title-wide crossover. "Fall Of The Hammer" begins with the first title appearing in December — **SPIDER-MAN 2099** #16 — and continues for five installments, ending in **PUNISHER 2099** #13, appearing in comic book stores the final week of the month.

"It will be over in a month. *Bang!* That's it," 2099 Editor Joey Cavalieri exclaimed, then added with a laugh, "How much damage could I possibly do in a month?"

Although Joey was not *absolutely* certain that the time was quite right to do a crossover, he conceded that the characters' meeting at some point was inevitable. "They obviously couldn't run in five parallel lines forever, so if you are going to have the characters meet, I thought this was the best way to do it."

HERO WORSHIP

The story concerns world megacorporation Alchemax's reaction to this new breed of heroes that has appeared on the scene. The corporation is not happy with the fact that these heroes are stealing the public's attention, so they attempt to recapture the common man's interest, and the attention of the worshipers of the first Heroic Age, the age of heroes who lived in the Marvel Universe.

And if Alchemax's manipulations cause the removal of certain thorns in their side — thorns such as Spider-Man and/or Ravage — so much the better.

The corporation intends to create their own group of superheroes on Valhalla, a mechanical city created by Alchemax that floats using part magnetic levitation, part antigravitron, in geo-synchronous orbit around the Earth above New York City. Valhalla is shaped like an inverted hammer. Hence the title of the crossover.

Alchemax attempts to cover up their actions using dummy movers to buffer corporate blame and present an avenue of deniability. Unfortunately, their machinations disrupt the orbit of Valhalla, and this gains the attention of the heroes of the 2099 Universe, bringing them together for the first time.

The idea for "Fall Of The Hammer" came out of the second 2099 Universe writers' conference, a two-day event which was held in Joey's office at Marvel Comics. At this conference, all the creative teams of the 2099 line united for the first time since the birth of the 2099 Universe more than a year ago.

The first day, Joey gathered only the writers — artists were not present until the second. The reasoning was to allow the writers to solidify their vision of the storyline before presenting anything, so a clear idea was conveyed, saving time and preventing confusion when the artists were to begin to interpret the saga.

Joey entered the meeting with several wisps of ideas that he hoped would trigger the writers' imaginations. "John Francis Moore (**DOOM 2099**) took my ideas and really ran with them," Joey admitted. "He was even able to incorporate more than one, and pull them all together by covalent bonding, or super glue, or something."

After John's initial input, all the other writers lent their thoughts: "Peter (David, of **SPIDER-MAN 2099**) was his usual vocal self," Joey revealed with a chuckle. "I don't know what it is with him — caffeine in the bloodstream or something. I cannot figure it out, but I tip my hat to him. He certainly knows what he is doing."

THE WARRIORS FIVE

So will there be far-reaching repercussions from "Fall Of The Hammer"?

"Nope, there will not be any repercussions," Joey remarked, straight-faced. "We thought we'd give the readers a break this time."

The "Fall Of The Hammer" *does* introduce a new band of super-powered individuals into the 2099 Universe. Alchemax's actions create a group called the New Asgardians. The members of the group take their names from the gods of Scandinavian mythology, names fans of the present-day Marvel Universe should immediately recognize: Thor, Loki, Baldar, Heimdall, and Hela. But Joey assures that the relationship between these New Asgardians and the ones of old is in name only.

Yet, given the pseudonyms of the group, and the floating city, can this merely be a visit from the old Norse regime? "Not a chance in Hell," Joey replied. "Or rather, not a chance in Valhalla!"

Although not the gods of old, the New Asgardians will all have enhanced strength and don outfits reminiscent of their mythological counterparts. Certain members will

acquire similar powers to those gods whose names they have chosen. For example, the *New Asgardian* Thor will be able to shoot electrical bolts, and Loki will have a degree of mystical prowess. Whether these new characters follow the corporate path of the evil Alchemax, or choose to fight for good, remains to be seen. "Something is going to happen to these characters, above and beyond their appearances in the crossover," Joey ominously promised.

All the action of "Fall Of The Hammer" will take place in New York City, "the town so nice they named it twice," Joey explained. So how do the X-Men, who are based in the deep Midwest, and Doom, who rules Latveria, find themselves in New York?

Joey revealed that Jordan Boone, a supporting character in **SPIDER-MAN 2099**, has a prior relationship with Henry Wang, Meanstreak in the X-Men. Jordan will become one of the New Asgardians. Although he would not divulge Doom's role in the saga, Joey *did* mention that a major player from **RAVAGE 2099** would become the new Hela.

With "Fall Of The Hammer," Joey hopes to establish a foundation for future 2099 stories. "I want to show that these books are not merely this concatenation, and everybody is all together. The crossover changes the status quo. These characters can no longer operate in secret. The floating city is so public that now the heroes have become part and parcel of everyday life in the 2099 Universe.

"The second Heroic Age has begun," he concluded.

The story begins in **SPIDER-MAN 2099 #16**, continues in **RAVAGE 2099 #15**, **X-MEN 2099 #5**, **DOOM 2099 #14**, and finishes in **PUNISHER 2099 #13** with, as Joey put it, "a slight wrap-up — or mop-up, depending on how it goes — in **SPIDER-MAN 2099 #17**."

"Readers are going to say, 'Boy, that was good, and it didn't cost me $200 to read the entire series. It was over in a month. Holy cats!'"

– *Steve Vrattos*

Before MARVELS...

. . .there was "The Origin of the Human Torch."

A few years ago, while working on an illustration of the Terminator walking through a wall of flames, artist Alex Ross was struck by the urge to produce an image of the *original* man afire — the *Human Torch*. He began a proposal for a fully painted homage to 1939's **MARVEL COMICS #1** featuring the Torch and the SubMariner.

With writer Kurt Busiek, Alex developed a four-issue, deluxe series which focuses, as Alex explained, "on the point of view of a common man who was around from the dawn of the super heroes. What we felt made it unique was that our main character would see these heroes from the *outside*, giving us a real perspective on how people would feel if they co-existed with creatures of this magnitude." **MARVELS** begins this month.

But before Kurt (and **MARVELS** Editor Marc McLaurin) became involved, Alex and his friend, Steve Darnall, produced a twelve-page "Origin of the Human Torch." It was not scheduled to be a part of **MARVELS**, since it is told strictly from the perspective of the Torch himself.

Here is the third of four installments for this "unseen **MARVELS** tale." Alex is also allowing **MARVEL AGE** to reproduce some of his "concept sketches," a series of painted illustrations produced to accompany the proposal, to appear with the introduction to each installment.

Enjoy.

THUS FAR: Professor Phineas Horton, a scientist decades ahead of his time, has created an artificial man. But this android possesses a spectacular flaw; upon contact with air, he bursts into flames. Despite the miraculous nature of his creation, Horton is subjected to the fears and derision of his fellow man, and his "offspring" labeled a menace...

I COULD BARELY COMPREHEND WHAT
HAD HAPPENED TO ME
IN THE COURSE OF MY SHORT
LIFE
I HAD BEEN RIPPED FROM MY FAMILIAL
WOMB AND THRUST INTO A WORLD
WHERE I DIDN'T BELONG
SO I HAD A
SCREAM
I HAD GONE FROM THE SECURITY
OF DARKNESS TO A PLACE WHERE
LIGHT BLAZED FROM EVERY THING
AND YET
AS I BECAME AWARE OF
THESE SENSATIONS
AND I ONCE AGAIN WOULD
FALL BACK INTO THE DARK
NESS AND THE SILENCE WHI
LACKED THE COMFO
OF THE
WOMB
MY FATHER BROUGHT ME INTO THIS WORLD
AND KEPT ME AS A SLAVE WHEN OTHERS WOULD HAVE
BEEN DESTROYED
WHY THEN
DID HE ALLOW
HIS SON TO SUFFER
WAS HE SO EASILY
TO FORSAKE
WAS IT POSSIBLE WHAT
I BELIEVED IN HIM AS A FATHER
HE DID NOT BELIEVE IN ME
AS A SON?

BEFORE MY LIFE COULD BE DISPOSED OF BY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY, MY FATHER ABATED THE PUBLIC PRESSURE BY SEALING ME AWAY.
I WAS PLACED IN A FOSTER HOME MADE ENTIRELY OUT OF STONE.
AWAY FROM THE OXYGEN.
AWAY FROM THE CROWDS.
SOME HOPED MY IMPRISONMENT WOULD BE PERMANENT, BUT MY FATHER HAD OTHER PLANS FOR ME.
HE PROVIDED A WAY FOR ME TO BE EDUCATED WHILE CONFINED TO MY CONCRETE TOMB, UNTIL SUCH A TIME AS HE COULD CURE OR CONTROL MY EXTRAORDINARY AFFLICTION.

I SEEM TO BE SOME KIND OF SLEEPING ENTITY
IN A VIRTUALLY LIFELESS STATE
I WAS TAUGHT THE NAMES OF OBJECTS THAT
I COULD NOT SEE, TOUCH, OR SMELL.
I COULD ONLY ENVISION THEM, AND WITH
NO FRAME OF REFERENCE, IT WAS NEXT TO
IMPOSSIBLE FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.
I WAS LEARNING A GREAT DEAL
ABOUT THE WORLD
AND EVEN MORE ABOUT THE
PAIN OF A FORCED SOLITUDE.
I WAS AWARE OF EVERYTHING
UNDERSTANDING
NOTHING

MONSTER ISLAND, home base for ADAM WARLOCK and the INFINITY WATCH.
Did you see what's in the PAPER? AVENGERS WEST COAST has DISBANDED!
Really? WHY, Gamora?
It's COMPLICATED, Moondragon, but essentially it boils down to the fact that they RESENTED living in the shadow of the EAST COAST--and ORIGINAL--team.
HUH! I'm glad I GOT OUT when I did.
We're NO better! Ever notice how we're referred to in the PRESS?:
("WARLOCK", BIG letters, and "the INFINITY WATCH", TEENY TINY letters, practically in PARENTHESES, usually as an AFTERTHOUGHT.
The Infinity Watch isn't even a REAL team--we're just a COLLECTION of SIDEKICKS!!
HUH?
Drax thought ONLY Moondragon was PSYCHIC??--
Didn't know HE was, TOO?
No, you DON'T understan--
DON'T even BOTHER--
It's downright unfair the LACK of RESPECT we get!!
WE HAVE DIGNITY, TOO! After all--
HEY!
Anybody see my LEATHER BOXER SHORTS? The ones with the RED HEARTS? The ol' Pipmeister's got a BIG DATE tonight, heh.
No? Well, let me know if you do. In the meantime, this troll'll be cataloguing his WET TEE SHIRT GLOSSIES.
..so what ELSE is in the paper today?
Well, there's a real FUNNY "Calvin and Hobbes" strip.
Drax LIKE Calvin!
..is my ROLE MODEL!

COME TO PAPA!

Send your letters to: MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE, c/o Marvel Comics Group, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. All letters to be considered for publication must include your complete name and address, though we will gladly withhold that info on request!

This month's pointedly paternal letter column title comes to us from **Tom Doarr.** Thanks, buddy! And remember, everyone — we need a newer and niftier title for this column every single month. So get crackin'!

Dear Sir,

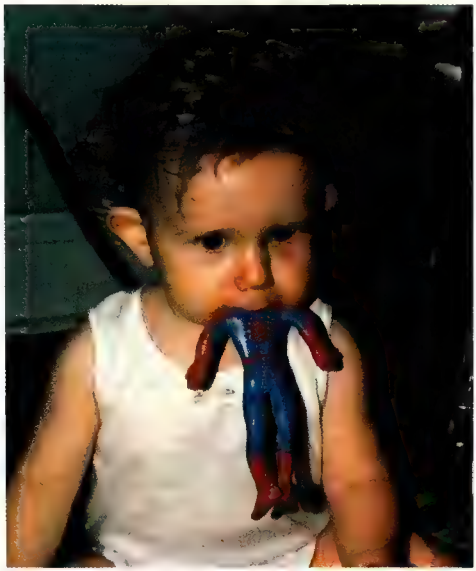
I have written to MARVEL AGE a few times with no luck of a response, so I'll keep it short and sweet. Please bring back Nick Fury, or at least more stories involving the Director of S.H.I.E.L.D., as he is too good a character to waste.

Is there any chance of another limited series? And what happened to the RULES OF THE GAME Graphic Novel starring Nick Fury and the Punisher, which was advertised in PUNISHER ANNUAL #4?

Mike Webb
326 North Ave.
Southend-on-Sea
Essex SS2 4EQ
England

Well, Mike, the Nick Fury/Punisher graphic novel is on hold right now, because artist Jim Lee is currently busy with other projects. However, there are already plans for everyone's favorite Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. to team-up with Wolverine and Captain America late next summer, and if we know Nick, he's bound to turn up in a bunch of guest appearances as well, probably when you least expect it.

On the other hand, something that you probably were expecting is our LETTER OF THE MONTH! Just like always, we've burrowed through our mountain of mail and struck pure gold — in fact, gold foil, along with holograms, die-cuts, and other such things. . .



Just can't get enough Spider-Man. . . Bailey Alanna Mounts, one year old at the time, tries to answer the age-old question, "Tastes great, or less filling?" One thing is certain, though — Bailey will never forgive her father, color wizard Paul Mounts, for hand-delivering this photo to MARVEL AGE.

Dear Marvel,

I've got myself a little dilemma here. On the average, I buy about thirteen of your comics regularly, at least four of which are of the $1.75 variety. So that means that with the other nine, I spend $18.25 a month, not including tax. This is relatively easy for me to come up with. The problem lies in the fact that with all the foil-embossed, die-cut, polybagged, and sealed-with-a-kiss special issues, it is getting harder and harder for me to keep up with my titles. I honestly believe that the people who work at Marvel love what they do and that they put their heart and soul into their work. However, Marvel is a business and when you are in a business you try to make money.

In respect to the above fact, I guess I really can't blame you for trying to make a buck. But as a consumer, well. . .the stuff is neat, but given a choice between paying $1.25, $1.75, and $2.95, I think I'd take the former. Don't get me wrong; the card inserts and special covers are cool, but not on a regular basis. For example, the polybagging of the "X-Cutioner's Song" series was unnecessary; the cards, however, were cool. So instead of bagging and making most collectors buy two, maybe you could stick the cards in their own special card set and treat the comics normally. But to be fair, the hologram covers on the four SPIDER-MAN covers last year were cool because it was Spider-Man's thirtieth anniversary.

I guess what I'm saying is save the special stuff for stuff that truly is special. Don't use it on first issues and such because your readers may not like the series and it ends up looking like you're using the souped-up covers as an incentive to buy the comics. In short, people generally don't buy comics for what's on the outside, they buy them for what's on the inside.

Oh, yeah, one more thing: GO PUNISHER!

Rich Brown
17 Pine Brook La.
West Hartford, CT 06107

Dear Marvel Comics,

I've just finished reading MARVEL AGE #127 and am writing in regard to the controversy over "gimmick" covers. From your standpoint, these covers are a valuable marketing tool,

but they lead many comics retailers to order gimmick covers with no regard to storyline.

One comics dealer I know collects comics but doesn't read any of them. Some dealer! He also sells sports cards/collectibles and supplies, Southwest art, and car stereos. Some dealers will order all #1 titles and then not order #s 2, 3, and 4 of four-part series such as DEADPOOL, SABRETOOTH, and U.S.AGENT.

Marvel is not the problem, nor are the true fans and final consumers, but the dealer who won't handle the whole line and inflate the prices of what they do sell, especially if it has a gimmick cover. Within the same month that CABLE #1 came out, some dealers were selling it for $7.00 and then giving people a dirty look if they asked for a sack to protect the comic book while they did their other shopping. I know this is MARVEL AGE, but the most inflated comic book was a recent *Superman* that was selling for $10.00 (cover price $2.95) the same week it came out.

No one, unless they are very rich, should try to buy every "collectable" comic book that comes out. Pick a few titles and stick to them, deviating once in a while for your favorite character's guest appearance in other titles. Every title should have special covers when warranted, so everyone gets dies-cuts, foils, holograms, etc., in their favorite titles. Dealers are the problem, not Marvel Comics. I suggest using the mail-order companies advertised in *Wizard* or your favorite Marvel title. You may get your comics a little late, but by subscribing or ordering in advance, you won't miss a title or pay well above cover price.

Until the Punisher runs out of ammo, make mine Marvel!

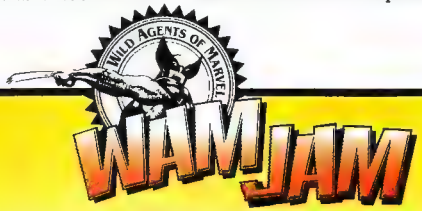
Joe Zachary
Friona, TX

We can sympathize, Rich and Joe, and (as announced in issue #129) Marvel experimented with a policy of publishing regular, unehanced versions of all our special issues, right alongside their glitzier counterparts. We're pleased to say that the experiment has been a resounding *success!* So from now on, all standard comic books with enhanced covers will be accompanied by unenhanced, regular-price versions. That way, everyone who wants to buy the enhanced version will be able to, but people can also enjoy the same story in an unenhanced edition, if they prefer.

As far as comics dealers are concerned, *you* have control over what dealers charge for their comic books. Comic books are only worth as much money as people are willing to pay. If everyone is willing to pay a lot for a comic book, that's what the dealer will charge. If *no one* is willing to pay that much, then the price could very well drop.

Let's also remember that there are an awful lot of dealers out there who are in this business because they *love* comics and want to give their customers a fair shake; not all dealers are like the ones Joe describes.

And with that, it looks like it's time to hunt up another of our favorite Wild Agents of Marvel in our monthly. . .



If you want to join in a Jam session, all you have to do is send us a letter on official WAM stationery or include your WAM I.D. number along with your letter.

Dear WAM,

I would like to know if Marvel has any upcoming figures for X-Men and Marvel super heroes, and if they have, if you could name them.

Jason Castro
(Address withheld by request)

No problem, Jason! There are indeed quite a few action figures in the works, for the *X-Men* line: Tusk, Bishop, Strong Guy, Omega Red, Apocalypse, Gauntlet, and a brand new Wolverine figure. Meanwhile, not to be outdone, the X-Force line will debut Grizzly, Cannonball, Crule, Kane, and *two* Cable figures. They're just the thing to have on hand when you're attacked by a marauding horde of evil mutant Barbies.

See ya next month!

THE BOSSMEN

by RICK PARKER

AT THE MEGATOUR IN N.Y.C.*
OKAY, GUYS...LISTEN UP! WHEN PETER DAVID GETS HERE, FORM A TIGHT CIRCLE AND ESCORT HIM INSIDE...REMEMBER--YOUR JOB IS TO PROTECT HIM FROM THE FANS!
SHORTLY...
ARE YOU READY MR. DAVID?
YEAH... LET'S GO IT!
Jim Hanley's UNIVERSE Inc. New York
UNIVERSE
HEH-HEH-HEH... THEY'VE SPOTTED ME ALREADY! I REALLY "HATE" ALL THIS NOTORIETY... HEH HEH HEH...
HEY LOOK--!
--COMIN' THROUGH TH' DOOR--
IT'S HIM.
MAN OH MAN!!
I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M IN THE SAME ROOM WITH HIM...
--THE BOSSMAN HIMSELF--
EH--! DAVID--! LOOKS LIKE MY REPUTATION PRECEDES YOU.
HEH HEH
TOM DEFALCO!
*AS REPORTED BY TOM DEFALCO -- STEVE.

checklist

PREMIERES

DEATH'S HEAD II/KILLPOWER:
BATTLETIDE III #1 (of 4) 1.95
The duo time-travels to destroy the Battletide.
G-FORCE #1 (of 4) 1.95
G-Force faces MyS-Tech & the Cyberdrones.
NFL PRO ACTION #1 2.25
A new X-Men story comes with this 64-page NFL news mag.
WILD ANGELS #1 (of 4) 1.95
Teaming up Wild Thing and Dark Angel.
X-MEN ADVENTURES SEASON II #1 1.25
Season II kicks off with the return of Morph.

First Week

BIKER MICE FROM MARS #4 1.50
The evil Plutarkians hoard fossil fuels.
CABLE #8 2.00
CAPTAIN AMERICA #424 1.25
Cap's new HQ
CAPTAIN MARVEL:
SPEAKING WITHOUT CONCERN 1.75
CLIVE BARKER'S PINHEAD #3 2.50
Pinhead in 18th century France
DAREDEVIL #325 2.50
DARK GUARD #5 1.75
DARKHAWK #36 1.25
DIE CUT #4 (of 4) 1.75
GROO THE WANDERER #109 2.25
"Man of the People," conclusion
GUN RUNNER #5 (of 6) 1.75
HAWKEYE #2 (of 4) 1.75
A bizarre genetic experiment
MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #147 1.50
A new story featuring Vengeance
MARVEL MASTERWORKS #27 34.95
MONSTER MENACE #3 (of 4) 1.25
Classic, pre-code horror tales
MOTORMOUTH & KILLPOWER #4 (of 4) 1.75
NAMOR #47 1.25
NIGHTSTALKERS #16 1.75
NOMAD #22 1.75
"American Dreamers," part 1 (of 4)
ORIGINAL GHOST RIDER #20 1.75
Caught in a battle between two ghosts
PUNISHER ANNIVERSARY MAGAZINE 3.95
REN & STIMPT #15 1.75
The boys are spotted with Elvis.
SACHS & VIOLENS #4 (of 4) 2.25
Closing in on Mollock
SAINT SINNER #5 1.75
S.S. travels to the Ectosphere.
SCARLET WITCH #2 (of 4) 1.75
SHE-HULK #60 1.75
Wyatt moves out, Jen's dad moves in.
SPIDER-MAN 2099 #16 1.25
SPIDER-MAN: MUTANT AGENDA 1.25
SPIDER-MAN CLASSIC #11 1.25
Spidey faces the evil Enforcers.
STARBLAST #2 1.75
THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE #2 1.95
THUNDERSTRIKE #5 1.25
UNCANNY X-MEN #309 1.25
Prof X learns of Jean and Scott's engagement.
WARHIDE #2 (of 4) 1.95
Pushkin fights the Twisted Eagles.
WARLOCK CHRONICLES #6 2.00
WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #109 1.25
WILD ANGELS #1 (of 4) 1.95
WOLVERINE: BLOOD HUNGRY 6.95

Second Week

ALAN DAVIS'S CLANDESTINE PREVIEW 1.50
ALPHA FLIGHT #129 1.75
AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #386 1.25
The return of the Vulture
AVENGERS LOG #1 1.95
BARBIE #36 1.25
CLIVE BARKER'S HARROWERS #3 2.50
Cleopatra escapes from hell.
CURSE OF THE WEIRD #3 (of 4) 1.25
Pre-comics code horror
DEATH'S HEAD II TPB:
THE WILD HUNT 12.95
DEATH'S HEAD II/KILLPOWER:
BATTLETIDE III #1 (of 4) 1.95
DRAGON STRIKE #1 1.25
GHOST RIDER #46 1.75
Vengeance takes over.
GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY #45 1.25
HYPERKIND #6 1.75
KING ARTHUR AND THE KNIGHTS OF JUSTICE #3 (of 3) 1.25
MARVEL X-MEN COLLECTION #2 (of 3) 2.95
With art by Jim Lee
MARVEL YEAR-IN-REVIEW 1993 3.95
MARVELS #2 5.95
The history of the Marvel universe
NIGHT THRASHER #7 1.75
NOVA #2 1.75
Is Nova's girlfriend a killer?
PUNISHER WAR ZONE #24 1.75
QUASAR #55 1.25
RAVAGE 2099 #15 1.25
REMOVAL MAN VS. MOTORMOUTH #2 (of 2) 1.95
Motormouth forgets her past.
'RODIRACE #3 (of 4) 1.95
SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #218 2.25
SECRET DEFENDERS #12 2.50
SILVER SABLE #21 1.25
The Pack fights Quentino's old gang.
SLEEPWALKER #33 1.25
Sleepy's origin is fully revealed.
SPIDER-WOMAN #4 (of 4) 1.75
TERRARISTS #4 (of 4) 2.50
The Fraternity colonizes Mars.
WILLIAM SHATNER'S TEK WORLD TPB 12.95
WOLVERINE #78 1.75
WONDER MAN #29 1.25
X-FACTOR #99 1.25
Wolfsbane cured—or is she?
X-MEN ADVENTURES SEASON II #1 1.25
X-MEN ADVENTURES TPB 4.95

MATCHES OF THE MONTH

ALPHA FLIGHT #129 1.75
Alpha Flight vs. the Hardliners
CABLE #8 2.00
Cable vs. Stryfe?
DARKHAWK #36 1.25
Darkhawk vs. Venom
DEATH'S HEAD II #15 1.95
D.H. vs. Alchemist
DEATH METAL #2 (of 4) 1.95
Death Metal vs. Alpha Flight
DIE CUT #4 (of 4) 1.75
Die-Cut vs. X-Beast & Overlord
DR. STRANGE #62 1.75
Strange vs. Dr. Doom
GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY #45 1.25
Aleta vs. Stakar
IMMORTALIS #4 (of 4) 1.95
Dr. Strange & Spitfire vs. Mephisto
NIGHT THRASHER #7 1.75
Thrash vs. Bandit
NIGHTSTALKERS #16 1.75
The Stalkers vs. Dreadnought
WOLVERINE #78 1.75

Third Week

AVENGERS #371 1.25
The return of Ghaur
BLAZE #3 (of 4) 1.75
Has Roxanne betrayed Blaze?
BLOODRUSH #3 (of 4) 1.95
BRATS BIZARRE #4 (of 4) 2.50
The Brats seek a cure for the virus.
CONAN SAGA #83 2.25
"The Shadow of the Scorpion," part 1.
CYBERSPACE 3000 #8 1.75
DOCTOR WHO #205 4.95
DOOM 2099 #14 1.25
ECTOKID #6 1.75
"Sir Sigmoids Arcadia," conclusion
EXCALIBUR #74 1.75
G-FORCE #1 (of 4) 1.95
GAMBIT #3 (of 4) 2.00
G.I. JOE #145 1.25
The Ninja Force
HELLHOUND #3 (of 4) 2.25
INCREDIBLE HULK #414 1.25
MARVEL AGE #133 1.00
MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS #148 1.50
Vengeance confronts the Leech.
MARVEL TALES #282 1.25
Spidey battles Slyde.
MORBIUS #18 1.75
MORT THE DEAD TEENAGER #3 (of 4) 1.75
NFL PRO ACTION #1 2.25
PUNISHER #87 1.25
RIPWIRE #2 (of 4) 1.95
Ripwire is attacked by Divine Developments.
SILVER SURFER VS. DRACULA 1.75
SPIDER-MAN #43 1.75
SUPER SOLDIERS #10 1.75
Childs goes after the Royal Family.
TRANSFORMERS: GENERATION 2 #4 1.75
Grimlock's men fall into a Decepticon trap.
WARLOCK & THE INFINITY WATCH #25 2.95
WHAT IF #58 1.25
"What if Wolverine led Alpha Flight?"
X-MEN #29 1.25
Revanche, Gambit and Sabretooth rescue the team.
X-MEN 2099 #5 1.25

Fourth Week

BARBIE FASHION #38 1.25
BLOODRUSH #3 (of 4) 1.95
BOOK OF THE DEAD #3 (of 4) 1.75
Concluding *Frankenstein.*
DAREDEVIL: THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR #5 (of 5) 2.95
DEATH DUTY #3 1.95
Caleb goes AWOL.
DEATH'S HEAD II #15 1.95
DEATH METAL #2 (of 4) 1.95
DEATH WRECK #2 (of 4) 1.95
DEATHLOK #32 1.75
"Cyberstrike," part 3 (of 4).
DOCTOR WHO: THE AGE OF CHAOS #2 (of 4) 1.95
The Doctor vs. his worst fears.
DOCTOR WHO *
CLASSIC COMICS #14 4.95
DR. STRANGE #62 1.75
FANTASTIC FOUR #365 1.25
GENETIX #5 (of 6) 1.75
GHOST RIDER & BLAZE: SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE #19 1.75
"Siege of Darkness"aftermath
HELLSTORM #11 2.00
Daimon plots his father's murder.
HOKUM & HEX #6 1.75
"Bloodshed," part 1 (of 4)
IMMORTALS #4 (of 4) 1.95
IRON MAN #301 1.25
"Crash and Burn," part 1 (of 6)
LAW DOG #10 1.95
MARVEL SPOTLIGHT #11 Free
Marvel's January titles.
MOON KNIGHT #59 1.75
Bloodline dies.
NEW WARRIORS #44 1.25
The return of Namorita
OFFICER OUTBODY #2 (of 4) 1.95
PLASMER #4 (of 4) 1.95
PUNISHER 2099 #13 1.25
PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #63 1.75
ROIDRAGE #3 (of 4) 1.95
SILVER SURFER #89 1.25
The return of Legacy
SPIDER-MAN UNLIMITED #4 3.95
Spidey reveals his secret identity!
SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #209 1.25
THOR #471 1.25
VENOM: THE ENEMY WITHIN #1 (of 3) 2.95
WILD THING #11 1.75
Rogue, She-Hulk and Storm?
WILLIAM SHATNER'S TEK WORLD #18 1.75
X-FORCE #31 1.25
To destroy Project Wideawake
X-MEN CLASSIC #92 1.25
Rachel Summers reveals the future.

DECEMBER SPOTLIGHT

ALAN DAVIS'S CLANDESTINE PREVIEW 1.50
A new super team from the co-creator of EXCALIBUR. "I'm really looking forward to seeing this new side of Alan Davis."
—Associate Editor Suzanne Gaffney

AVENGERS LOG #1 1.95
48 pages referencing every character and storyline. "This is an easy way to find out everything you've ever wanted to know about the Avengers."
—Editor Richard Ashford

CAPTAIN MARVEL: SPEAKING WITHOUT CONCERN 1.75
In this special 48-pager, Marvel takes on racism. "...lots of action and an important message."

DAREDEVIL #325 2.50
"Fall From Grace" concludes with 48 pages and bound-in poster. "All I'm going to say is, it will be Elektra-fying!"
—Assistant Editor Pat Garrahy

DEATH'S HEAD II: THE WILD HUNT 12.95
The four-issue limited series compiled in 96-pages. "I liked Death's Head a lot, and DH II is even better. It's got twice the violence and twice the fun!"
—Assistant Editor Lia Pelosi

DRAGON STRIKE #1 1.25
Adapting the role-playing game. "Whether you're into the game or not, you're going to like this book. It's fantasy in the fabulous Tolkien tradition."—Editor Glenn Herdling

MARVEL MASTERWORKS #27 34.95
A 224-page, hardbound, collection of AVENGERS #21-30. "They're great stories of "Cap's kookie quartet," plus the return of the Wasp and Goliath. You couldn't ask for a better line-up!"
—Editor Tom Brevoort

MARVEL YEAR-IN-REVIEW 1993 3.95
The best and worst of 1993 in 48 glossy pages. "It's meaner, nastier and funnier. It's sure to get me fired!" —Associate Editor Evan Skolnick

PUNISHER ANNIVERSARY MAGAZINE 3.95
With 48 glossy pages of art and articles. "We're going to find out what made Frank Castle the psycho he is today, and if he'll survive until tomorrow."
—Editor Steve Saffel

SECRET DEFENDERS #12 2.50
Thanos assembles his own unique team. With prismatic foil cover. "The cover looks awesome! Why? Tom Grindberg has a great imagination. He makes me look good!"
—Editor Mike Rockwitz

SILVER SURFER VS. DRACULA 1.75
The classic battle from TOMB OF DRACULA. "The cosmic vs. the dead!" —Editor Mort Todd

SPIDER-MAN: MUTANT AGENDA 1.25
The first-ever comic strip/comic book crossover. "It's going to be a blast to see how two different creative teams handle the same story, in two different formats, from two different points of view."
—Editor Danny Fingeroth

VENOM: THE ENEMY WITHIN #1 (of 3) 2.95
Debuting with a cardstock, glow-in-the-dark cover. "I've always loved Bruce Jones's writing and he's got a very interesting take on Venom. And Bob McLeod's pencils are just as impressive."—Assistant Editor Mark Bernardo

WILLIAM SHATNER'S TEK WORLD 12.95
Collecting the first five issues. "These stories are great, plotted by William Shatner and penciled by Lee Sullivan. Plus, it's got a very innovative new design, and I should know, because I'm the one who designed it!" — Assistant Editor Carlos Lopez

WOLVERINE: BLOOD HUNGRY 6.95
By Peter David & Sam Kieth. "It's a real Sam Kieth tour-de-force; he penciled, inked and colored it. Oh, and that Peter David guy's no slouch either!" — Editor Richard Ashford

X-MEN ADVENTURES 4.95
The first four issues compiled in 96-pages. "Reading these four issues back-to-back is great because they're really just one good, long story. And, you can compare it to the animated show [and see why this one is better —just kidding!" —Editor Kelly Conese

CROSSOVERS

Blood and Thunder

WARLOCK CHRONICLES #8 2.00
Part 11 of 13: Guest-starring Dr. Strange and Thor.
WARLOCK & THE INFINITY WATCH #25 2.95
Part 12 of 13: Featuring an embossed, die-cut cover.
THOR #471 1.25
Part 13 of 13: Odin attempts to restore Thor's sanity.

Fall of the Hammer

SPIDER-MAN 2099 #16 1.25
Part 1 of 5: The legendary Thor returns to Earth.
RAVAGE 2099 #15 1.25
Part 2 of 5: The new Asgardians take over Valhalla.
X-MEN 2099 #4 1.25
Part 3 of 5: The X-Men battle the new Asgardians.
DOOM 2099 #14 1.25
Part 4 of 5: Doom battles Loki.
PUNISHER 2099 #13 1.25
Part 5 of 5: Will Valhalla fall on New York?

Suicide Run

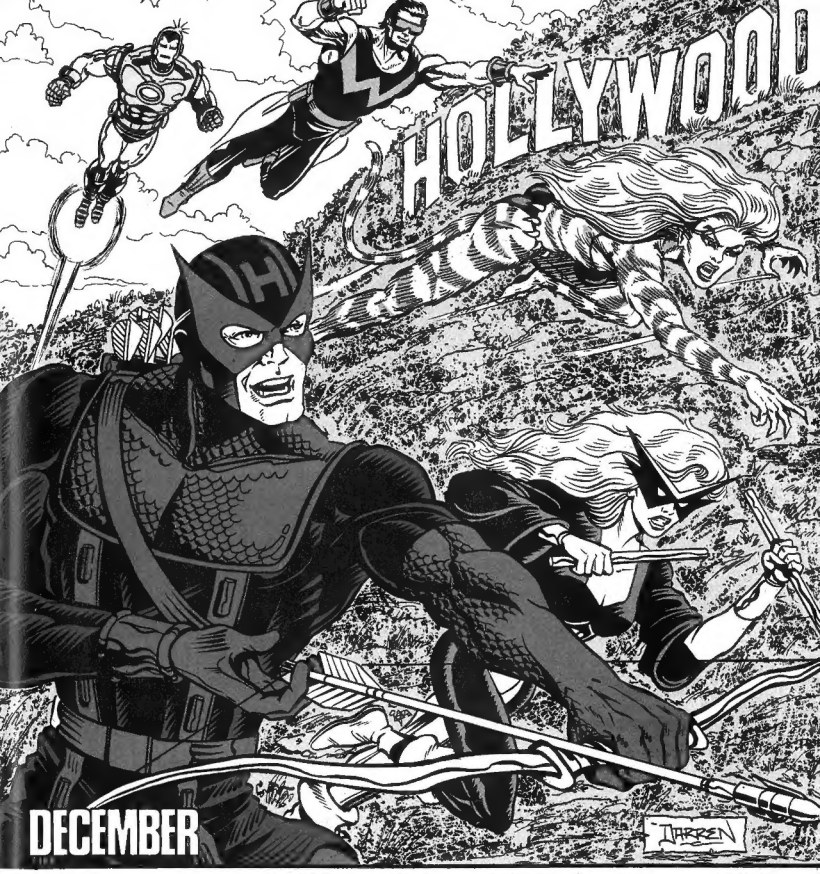
PUNISHER WAR ZONE #24 1.75
Part 5 of 10: Broken and unarmed—can the Punisher survive?
PUNISHER #57 1.25
Part 6 of 10: Who will succeed the Punisher?
PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #63 1.75
Part 7 of 10: "John Doe" or the Punisher?

Starblast

STARBLAST #2 1.75
Part 4 of 12: Quasar battles the Shi'ar Guard for the Starbrand.
NAMOR #47 1.25
Part 5 of 12: The Starblasters are destroying Earth's oceans.
QUASAR #55 1.25
Part 6 of 12: Nova, Black Bolt, and Thunderstrike join Quasar.
FANTASTIC FOUR #385 1.25
Part 7 of 12: The FF and Namor battle a sea monster.

GUEST APPEARANCES

CYBERSPACE 3000 #8 1.75
Warlock & Thanos
DARKHAWK #36 1.25
Venom
EXCALIBUR #74 1.75
Professor X
HYPERKIND #6 1.75
Trip Munroe (HOKUM & HEX)
INCREDIBLE HULK #414 1.25
Silver Surfer
MORBIUS #18 1.75
Deathlok and the Wraith
MOTORMOUTH & KILLPOWER #4 (of 4) 1.75
Death's Head II
OFFICER OUTBODY #2 (of 4) 1.95
Dr. Strange
PLASMER #4 (of 4) 1.95
Silver Surfer, Black Knight, Captain Britain
SAINT SINNER #5 1.75
Ectokid
SCARLET WITCH #2 (of 4) 1.75
Avengers West Coast
SPIDER-MAN #43 1.75
Iron Fist
SPIDER-WOMAN #4 (of 4) 1.75
USAgent
THUNDERSTRIKE #5 1.25
Spider-Man
WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #109 1.25
Night Thrasher
WONDER MAN #29 1.25
Spider-Man



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	ENTER SHANG-CHI, MASTER OF KUNG-FU, 20 YEARS AGO IN MARVEL SPECIAL EDITION #1		HAPPY BIRTHDAY JOHN BABCOCK 1	MARY JEAN SOTO 2		
JENNIFER O'DONNELL 5			MICHAEL HOBSON 8	KLAUDIA MARIN JOSE DELBO 9	HENRY DORRELL 10	JOHN BUSCEMA MARY McPHERRAN 11
JOEY CAVALIERI LORETTA KROL 12	KYLE BAKER 13	14	MICHAEL KRAIGER ALAN SMITH 15	HILDY MESNIK 16	MARK TEXIERA 17	GAIL ZITO 18
ELIOT BROWN PETER GILLIS 19	MARIA PARWULSKI 20	CHRIS MARRINAN JOHN SEVERIN 21	KRIS RENKEWITZ GREG WRIGHT 22	PHIL FELIX ED LAZELLARI 23	24	JOE ROSEN 25 CHRISTMAS
STEVEL SAFFEL MARK POWERS ED MURR 26	27	STAN LEE JANICE CHIANG CATHERINE SHELDON RALPH MACCHIO 28	PAUL BECTON BARRY DUTTER 29	30	FABIAN NICIEZA DAHLIA APONTE 31	

MARVEL
Age
132
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
JANUARY 1994
$1.00 US $1.25 CAN 80p UK
Alan Davis's
ClanDestine™
secrets!
ALAN DAVIS
MARK FARMER
DIRECT EDITION
13211
Plus:
The secrets of the Human Torch™
The first 2099™ crossover